

BO CHEN

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From Bo
To Nikki

Nikki,

I never saw value in commitment for its own sake, but when you shared with me your belief and perspective that it all came down to being about a choice, I really thought about that and felt I could see what you meant. You expressed to me that you are a unique person, and that you never questioned the impact of seeing something new or of being fundamentally changed by it. While I've always believed in seeing the biggest picture, I've also realized the biggest picture is important only in that it provides the best context and greatest frame-of-reference; but that such stance by itself is empty, vacuous, and lacking. Perhaps what is missing is that sort of irreplaceable individual subjectivity and compelling distinctive uniqueness.

The only explanation I could think of is that you may have misunderstood what I meant and I probably also miscommunicated what I had intended to convey when I told you that I thought the world was essentially coming to an end in about 20 years time and that we should just live selfishly for each ourselves. I shared it with you because it truly is how I feel about that, but in retrospect I believe if I had intent for more than just friendship I would not have disclosed something like that in such a way or at such a stage. But really, I would have hoped it wouldn't have mattered one way or another. It is without doubt a very pessimistic outlook. Maybe even overly pessimistic, but only because out of a genuine abundance of caution. I consider myself optimistically-pessimistic, if that makes any sense at all. As you know, there are never any true guarantees in life anyway. On an individual level there is just so much variability to true happiness that any consideration of macroeconomics is largely pointless. So I do "live in the moment", in spurts and intermittently. The rest of the time I tend to take a "biggest picture view". The juxtaposition can be quite stark but somehow it fits. And I can also understand why such worldviews are not something that you could find yourself aligning with. In truth, at times I felt that you were trying to bring yourself to agree what everything I shared with you, even sometimes mentally bending over backwards to try to accommodate what you perceived to be my views and positions, when in fact I would

have more than welcomed a heated debate or cordial argument and such tantalizing conversation of sorts. So when I asked if you if thought it was very selfish of me, I expected you to say yes, and then try to show me your outlook, how you saw and perceived of the world, and through it all I would have gained another unique frame of reference within the larger context of everything else. I've always been someone who wanted to figure out the biggest picture, the highest truth, the deepest reality, even if it goes against everything that I wanted. I told myself that once I knew everything, I'd be completely free to pick and choose and decide what I wanted to experience, the views and perspectives I wished to adopt, even if it went against the biggest picture. The biggest picture is just the starting point, I never allowed myself to be confined nor restricted by it; but at the same time I didn't want to make any decision nor commit to anything without first seeing and knowing everything - at least from that sort of highest level. Despite what you have stated, I still find it hard to believe that my initial cancellation of the Seattle trip didn't have any influence or bearing on your decision to write me. But I'm sorry I didn't respect your decision, it wasn't intentional, it was just that more than anything I felt that if I had known or been able to predict the outcome I would have done it very differently.

Sometimes it just all feels so surreal. Not only this life and my very own existence, but indeed the absolute totality of all of grand existence itself. Why this? Why here? Why now? and why me? Maybe the greatest mystery and wonder is that anything ever even exists at all; and that existence itself in all its myriad forms and intricate ways is perhaps the most splendid awe-inspiring wonderment. In all our wanderings, we sometimes come across others who think and feel the same way as we do .. and that no matter how fleeting or momentary, we can take comfort in knowing when our path crossed that we all share a common existential sameness in that regard, alone but yet connected through our loneliness. Whether it is called friendship or interpersonal interaction or personal collisions, I don't think it is the name or label that really matters. But I do believe it is truly possible to know without having to understand, and to like without needing to have.

I am somewhat aware of the apparent irony that even the most genuine forms of altruism could boil down to be about yet another type or variant of selfishness. Though the motives and intentions are often different, it still comes back to being about how it makes us feel. I've merely settled on the view that such distinctions are not differences that truly make a difference, except perhaps in instances in which I manage to catch myself trying too hard that it then becomes akin to your analogy of carelessly and selfishly thrusting myself out there in order to be fixed. No, I know that is not what I really want, nor is it what it is really all about.

You once shared with me that you wished to be wanted and desired for who you are and not for what you can do for someone else; and likewise that you try to surround yourself with people whom you want to want to be around. I agree with your sentiment but I also feel that indeed it is something so rare and infrequently found. So many relationships in life are calculating and transactional, such as our interactions with parents, family, friends, employers and even society at large. All of which are mostly predefined, efficient, structural, conditional and clearly delineated, yet heartless and without magic or aliveness. Most people spend their entire lives without ever feeling something like this, without ever having known such desires or to have them aroused and brought to life by them. Those who can't relate to this usually never will. I think if you have ever felt such a moment, or even so much as truly contemplated or pondered upon it, then you must already know exactly what I meant.

I hope you find and sustain the love and happiness that you seek, in whatever way and through whatever means it might be manifested and expressed. I'm sure you will make a wonderfully nurturing mother and a lovingly devoted wife, and a kind and caring friend. There are no greater joys in life than those.

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Thank you for having written to me, I still wish to express my appreciation for the time that you spent sharing your words and your thoughts. They were lovely and I found them to be very compelling. I definitely feel it is possible to find and keep that sort of true happiness in life. I'm sorry that I offended you and made you feel uncomfortable. I hope you are doing well.

Bo

December 15th 2015 A.D.E.

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Nikki,

Space and time are actually one whole entity, if current scientific theories are to be believed. Everything that we know of exists in this fabric of 'space-time'. Supposedly at the moment of the big bang some 13.8 billion years ago, the entire universe was a singular infinitesimal point of infinite density. Everything was perfect in the sense that it was the exact same everywhere. Perfect symmetry and perfect order. As "time" went on, its counterpart "space" also expanded. As the universe expanded it also cooled, and as it cooled the symmetries were broken - much like the way random ice crystals starting to form as homogeneous pools of water are cooled to freezing temperatures. From the first initial moment onwards the entire universe has been transforming from an extremely ordered and low entropy state to that of much higher entropy and more disordered states. This is what is known as the arrow of time. Eventually after more than 100 trillion years + the universe will die in a very cold process called "heat death" whereby matter decays back into massless radiation and it continuously expands and cools, thinning out and thinning out until the once star-filled universe filled with stars and galaxies and brimming with planets harboring life ...and every lifeform that has ever been self aware, that has ever fallen in love, the golden ages of civilization, etc all the to be replaced with what would appear to be an infinite space of zero density in a truly unimaginable time from now. (the anti-thesis of the big bang state) In about 10^{100} years from now there will be nothing left, even the last of the remaining black holes would have evaporated as the last tick of the tock of the 'clock' finishes, time disappears and nothing happens, and it keeps not happening, forever.

There is a stranger theory, called the Penrose CCC, which basically states that this final 'end state' actually is the conformal equivalent of the 'beginning state', and infinite space of zero density is the same or at least indistinguishable from infinitesimal space of infinite density. Basically, time only exists when 'things happen', after the last 'event' occurs in the universe, the last tick of the clock, time disappears altogether (literally, not figuratively like money disappearing,

etc) and without time there also ceases to exist the notions of distance, matter, space... and the units of measurement are reset, everything starts anew, and the end state of one universe (infinite big, zero density) becomes transformed into (or rather already IS) the starting state of another new universe (zero space, infinite density).... or something like that. In any case, the true nature of reality seems very bizarre and I'm unsure how deep the rabbit hole goes. While it has no impact on everyday life, it is interesting to ponder and contemplate nonetheless.

So moving on to more solid ground... Everything that we see today that is ordered - indeed from life of newborn babies to that of newly constructed skyscrapers, airplanes and cruise ships, etc - they all gain their local order (local low-entropy states in a 'closed system') at the direct expense (entropically speaking) of their outside surroundings and their external environment by expelling more disorder to their outside environment (making the rest of the totality of existence a higher-entropy state). Think of it this way, cooler temperatures have more order and lower entropy (entropy can be basically thought of as "randomness", the more entropy there is in any system the more "random" and "disordered" it is) than warmer temperatures because air molecules are more closely bundled together in colder temperatures versus being more random and racing around in hotter temperatures. A refrigerator operates by making the inside of a refrigerator cooler at the expense of exporting that heat into the external outside world. This is also why opening your refrigerator door to try to cool your home would never work! Because the coolness being generated in a fridge comes back out as heat in the back radiator! Air conditioners only work because the heat is exported to the outside environment in a unit that is placed outside the building or house, but still, the planet as a whole is made warmer and not cooler!

Life works the same way. Our nearest star, the sun, started out as a highly ordered state at its moment of birth some 5 billion years ago. It burns hydrogen and converts that into helium and other heavier elements in a nuclear fusion process. In the process it also expels heat and light rays as it continuously transforms from a higher order to lower

order state. Some of the 'order' that it expels falls unto the planet earth in the form of sunshine. Through a process of photosynthesis, plants soak up some of that order/light and convert it to fuel to grow themselves, but in the process of making themselves more ordered, planets also excrete other byproducts of waste that inevitably transform their external environments into more disordered states. Animals eat the planets and themselves become more 'ordered' by consuming the plants low entropy states, but also at the same time creating even more disorder that is expelled to the external environment. Humans then eat these planets and animals (we are at the top of the food chain), and we make ourselves more ordered (grow) by riding on the backs of other systems that came before us : Human -> cow -> grass -> sunlight -> big bang -> ?.

As a whole, everything in the universe is becoming more and more disordered, it always has been and always will be. There are but isolated patches of increasing (local) order, but even that is only possible through the exporting of disorder to outside (global) surroundings! A baby grows and becomes more ordered at the expense of consuming food (ordered states) and expelling waste (disorder) to its environment. So it is rather funny, and a tad bit ironic, that extremely wealthy people (who are of the highest order and by definition create the highest disorder) fool themselves into feeling good about what they are doing by 'going green' or 'giving back', or by pretending to reduce their total carbon footprint by using carbon offsetting or carbon tax swaps or some other derivate scams.

Luckily, most of this is not differences that make a difference. There will still be stars shining in the universe for well into a hundred trillion years or more, our own sun won't even begin running out of fuel for another billion years, and regardless of how bad climate change and resource consumption issues are here on earth, these issues won't likely have a materially significant adverse effect or any substantiated negative impact on our generation or our lives until when we are well into our 50's, by which time the peak and prime of our once youth will have been a foregone memory of the subjective distance past. As bad as

everything is in the world, I think we still have a good twenty years or so to enjoy it all for one last time. You probably think I'm very selfish for taking such a view?

I once read somewhere that biologically speaking, the human body starts 'aging' after the age of 20, and that it is all downhill from there, sure very slowly at first, but then faster and faster. For females in particular, after the age of 30 it starts to become more and more difficult to have healthy children. Even for men, post -30 testosterone starts to decline measurably year after year. Once someone hits age 50, then it really starts going downhill. So I still have 20 years left to make it count before it is for all extents and purposes all over anyway!

Adversarial relationship with time, indeed!

Nikki,

It was six months ago that you first wrote me your initial letter in response back to my contact message. It is hard to believe that half a year passed by so quickly.

Back in early March I had just about turned 30 years old and I had no idea what I wanted to do with the second half of the rest of my life. I was merely coasting through life and drifting on by. Nothing held my interest anymore and my whole life felt like a rather meaningless existence. It was not a good way to live.

What started out as a social experiment and a prank of sorts quickly ended up being very real for me. The truth is I was on PenPalWorld because I was bored out of my mind. Bored at work. Bored of life. How ironic and perhaps fitting that I ultimately ended up being the victim of my own prank and the lab rat and test subject in my own social experiment. Had I known then what I know now I would have done a lot of things very differently. But – as selfish as this may sound – I don't regret having contacted you. False pretenses or not, you ended up giving me two of the best weeks of my life and helped make me feel truly alive; something I hadn't felt in a long time.

I've probably let down, disappointed, hurt and pushed away nearly everyone I've ever encountered in my life. Even as a child I've always felt rebellious and a bit of a loner and maverick, I know that I only had one life to live and I was not going to let anyone else tell me how I should live it. I thought that if only I just had this true freedom, liberation and choice that I would always do what was best for me and that it would make me happiest.

Through I don't think God actually really exists, I do believe I know why people need him. I took the path of doing exactly what I thought the "self" wanted and I've completely failed. I've done almost everything I've ever wanted to do and it hasn't really brought me any true or lasting happiness. I think some people come closer to God (or the notion or

concept of God) so that they can “give up the self” and by giving up the “self” with all its foolishness they can then finally be happy and free.

Will you meet me at the same coffee shop 30 years from today? Friday, September 15, 2045 at 9:00AM local time in the morning. If the Poulsbohemian Coffeehouse no longer exists then I'll be at the nearest coffee shop from where it used to be. I'm very sorry I canceled on you back in April. I've never made any sort of commitment like this before but I promise you I will be there this time, no matter what. I'm completely sure of it now. If you show up I'll finally make it up to you in person. I'd love to meet you at least one time in my life, even if it is near the end of it. I think I'd still always miss you even if I met her.

Bo

Nikki,

You know what is funny? I've been regretting not meeting you for so long.. I realized we have already met! And more than just once!

The very first time was actually at the very beginning of creation - about 13.8 billion years ago, at the moment of the Planck Epoch (the first 10^{-43} seconds after the moment of the big bang) when all the entire universe was compressed into the space much smaller than even the size of a single atom. To give you some appreciation for just how brief and fleeting the Planck Era really was, there are more Planck units of time (10^{-43}) in one single second than there are seconds in the entire history of the known universe (13.8 billion years). At the very first moment of creation everything was one, it was good and perfect. But that didn't last long :(

Perhaps the second time we met was about 6 billion years ago, inside the furnace of a dying star that existed even prior to the conception of our own sun. Every single carbon atom in your entire body was created through the thermonuclear reaction process inside that ancient star whose demise gave rise to you, to me and to everyone else. Without carbon and water, there can be no life on earth or anywhere else in the Universe. And certainly every atom heavier than Iron was created by a dying star that exploded in a massive supernova. In a sense, we are all stardust! I suppose that gives a new meaning to "ashes to ashes" :)

We "met" for the third time - or more accurately our ancestors of which we are direct genetic lineage decedents from - in more recent times during LUCA (Last Universal Common Ancestor) about 3.5 billion years ago as single-cell organisms (almost like bacteria) in the Paleoarchean era - perhaps floating in microbial mats on the sea floor. This was also the very first time that DNA/RNA evolved and came into being. It would also later serve as the genetic vehicle and information replication database of which now houses and catalogues every single living organism in existence on this planet today without any exception, including all 7 billion humans and of course you and me. Is it not remarkable that we

can trace our roots all the way back to LUCA and earlier? A single unbroken line for billions of years!

It was only about 2 or 3 million years ago that our species (humans) first appeared in or around ancient Ethiopia. We were once all in a very small tribe or bands of tribes living somewhere in that area of what is now known today to be Africa, living our lives amongst the banks of those ancient flowing rivers and waters of life. Our ancestors hunted and gathered for food, and lived short and brutal lives but had they not made it and if they weren't able to successfully reproduce and pass down their offspring, we would not be here today. I would absolutely love to visit the Great Rift Valley with you someday – it would be such a walk to remember. Just to hold your hand while reminiscing that it was about two millions years ago that our greatest of great ancestors once roamed these lands, that here is where we all started out, our species infant cradle. Talk about coming home full circle!

Once upon a fifth time - in even more recent times - we also came from the one same family tree. In fact, if we traced our roots back far enough we shared the exact same mother and father. (though never at the same time, Adam and Eve never actually met one another, that's a bit complicated lol) "Mitochondrial Eve" or otherwise also known as MRCA (Matrilineal Most Recent Common Ancestor) was our actual ancient mother - a real human female who lived and died about 100,000–200,000 years ago. Can you believe it, Nikki? Every single person alive today share the same ancestral mother, we all came from her, including you and me! In a way, I could call you my long lost distant sister without having to attach any religious context to it!

March 15th 2015 A.D.E, we met again for the sixth time when you wrote back to me on PenPalWorld – an online site that offered a penpal service, by any other measure a complete novelty until the 21st century. By this time civilization and indeed life itself had changed so much as to be completely unrecognizable from its ancient roots. Just a few hundred years ago we would never have been able to contact one another, certainly not with the ease of instant communication across thousands of

miles. Throughout the vast majority of human history people were born, lived and died without ever leaving their little village. Their little corner of the world was all that they ever knew, and to them, all that ever existed. Isn't it remarkable that only within the last two decades or so that we as a species and global civilization adopted the use of the Internet and cell phones and other technologically advanced, instantaneous, pervasive and ubiquitous forms of communication? Our initial correspondence consisted of nothing more than bits on a server or the pulsating state-changes of individual electrons and their energized quantum vibrations on a physical wire, TCP/IP packets flowing through across on routers and switches and RJ-45 Ethernet cables and across the backbone of the fiber optic cables on the Information superhighway (Internet). An unbroken digital electronic communication chain from your keyboard to my monitor and vice versa.

But actually meeting you in person for the seventh time would be the icing on the cake, the last penultimate swan-song of a universe that had become self-aware of itself, the final epitome of its very own existence. The possibility and potential of more intelligent and advanced extraterrestrial aliens notwithstanding, the human brain is the most complex system in the entire galaxy, and perhaps the entire universe. You are one of the most interesting people I've ever written to, and I've been doing this for a long time. I'm most certainly the longest winded person I've ever known. However short or fleeting it actually was, I think we shared something truly great, something very few others have ever shared on this spinning third rock from the sun that we call the pale blue dot or even in this vast expanse of this most dark and lonely universe.. What is it like for the universe to finally meet this particular aspect and expression of itself at perhaps what is the most fine-tuned pinnacle point of its entire existence?

Maybe our next meeting, what would perhaps be our seventh one, could occur sometime next springtime of 2016. It was wasn't for you, I would probably never have visited Seattle. I most certainly would never have the idea to go to Japan by myself or on my own volition. But I would definitely like to tag along with you to Narita next spring, if you still plan

on going and if you were not going with anyone else. If and when you book your tickets, if you would be willing to share your flight plan and trip itinerary with me, then I'd love to meet up with you in Japan and we can go see the Cherry Blossoms together. I know I would like that very much. Or if you want, if we can get our schedules to match and synchronize, I would be very happy to fly out from DFW to SEA and then maybe we could even be on the same outbound international flight from Seattle to Narita! Long airplane flights, especially international and intercontinental ones, tend to always be somewhat tedious and tortious for me, and I usually don't adjust that well to the time zone change and jet lag, however with you by my side I think it would be fun! I'll even get you a hellokitty backpack and lovingly tease you about Nikita going to Narita! I know there is so much we could do and see in Japan and I've love to do all of them with you.

-Bo

Dear Nikki,

I know my own weaknesses, flaws and imperfections. I have always been able to rise above the subjective moment and take a completely objective biggest-picture view of everything.

If that noble intent is what really matters the most then I know who I really am and what I really want, although I have not always been able to stay true to myself.

Even given all the imperfections and insecurities you have shared with me about yourself I still feel that you are a much better person than I am. I have genuinely felt that about you in a way that I have never felt for anyone else before. This is something that really has nothing to do with intellect or physical attributes or anything else like that. It is perhaps more than even personality or character.

In terms of a romantic connection, I have thought a lot about what makes an interaction so special and irreplaceable. Objectively, there are so many people in the world that there must be literally thousands, if not tens or even hundreds of thousands of other unique individuals out there with whom we could potentially share that sort of interaction and personal collisions.

It certainly seems that at least in the initial stages that 'first-contact' has always been so arbitrary and situational, nothing more than seemingly random chance-encounters and fortuitous greetings and meetings. While the romantic side of me totally understands why, if you were tragically widowed you would probably never get remarried, or why you have probably decided that you will only ever make the commitment to love a man with everything you have and for the rest of your life but only make such a commitment once, the analytical aspect of me is puzzled by it.

So much of life – and love is perhaps no exception – comes down to external factors like life-timing, physical-location, and other situational circumstances. Imagine two different men, both equally compelling and both capable of having the actual potential to be the ‘one right man’ for you, albeit each distinctively unique in his own particular way. And imagine that you had merely bumped into the first man first, developed very strong feelings for him and later fully committed to him. What if something happened to that man or what if he later on decided to leave you? Would you turn around and give the second man a chance or would you become emotionally closed-off because it hurt too much and it was too hard and painful to try again? What if you had met the second man first and never even encountered the first man? Do you see the hypothetical dilemma here?

Well, I think I figured it out. Beyond merely religious reasons I think I also know why you place such an importance on maintaining virginity. As with other forms of loyalty, devotion and commitment, I believe the answer is because it changes us, it rewires our physiology and it forces us to be or become a different person. An apt analogy would be if you heated a raw uncooked egg it would undergo a chemical process that would permanently alter its form in a way that could never be reversed simply by cooling it back down. Likewise, falling in love is not a process that can be reversed by any sort of emotional ‘undo’. For better or for worse, we are never the same person ever again. So perhaps what you are really waiting for is the right person who you actually want to change you. Someone with whom you finally want to put your whole life in that person’s hands. And once you have merged with him in every possible way and he has so utterly transformed you into the woman you would have become, into his woman, then there is no going back or falling in love with another man. Whoever you end up with, you would have committed to become molded just for him. This why the decision is so important, and why you could only do it once. It is probably also why feeling ‘wanted’ is such a crucial component for you.

I want to always believe that it is actually possible to find and sustain that sort of love and to stay in that kind of moment forever. Something so exhilarating, real, and alive. Deep down, I have always pictured, visualized, and conceptualized this as what I truly want to be and experience the most out of life – above and beyond all else. Just something playful and carefree, almost like a hide-and-go-seek or a sort of lost-and-found. Full of awe-inspiring wonderment and that wondrous feeling of falling, staying and basking in love. Childlike but mature, where the whole world is one's playground and love is like a recess of the mind that never has to end.

The sort of love and happiness that I have always envisioned has never really depended upon external, situational or circumstantial factors – beyond that of perhaps being besides that kind of person with whom I've always wanted to love with everything that I had. Two people could live the exact same life based upon external metrics and other objective standards (education, career, income, social economic factors, etc) yet one person could be absolutely lonely and miserable while the other person might be in love with every moment of his life. I know I would much rather be poor and struggling, but in love and living with meaning and purpose versus being wealthy but indifferent, apathetic and bored.

Ultimately, all of life boils down to being about experiences. Experiences are about emotions, moods, perceptions, feelings, and mental states. It doesn't matter how we emotionally 'get there' (there is nothing wrong with being rich and also 'in love' all at the same time) just that we end up 'getting there'.

But it seems too often we lose sight of what is really important and what truly affords us the most intense 'effective-happiness' by chasing after the wrong elements or using the wrong strategies. For example, the two short weeks of letter writing that we shared was much more memorable for me than the best vacation or trip that I ever took. If I found the girl of my dreams and I knew for sure she was the one and she felt exactly the same way about me, I would give everything, even my own life, just to spend one perfect day with her - if that was all we could have or share

together. Our subjective inner worlds, and how we feel about ourselves and the ones we love, is far more profound and impactful than anything else could possibly ever be. So this is my perspective and my priority and also where I come from and what I look for in life.

You once shared with me the sentiment that you felt like you were somewhat “missing out” on life, that you often found yourself to be awkward or dull with new people and that you knew there was more and that you wanted more but you were not sure of how best to express that about yourself. I think I can understand, it must feel like living behind a glass window, where you can look, but you cannot really touch or interact, where you simultaneously fear being vulnerable and hurt and yet at the very same moment you really want and need to be vulnerable and exposed and to have that feeling that your faith is finally rewarded. In my own particular way I believe I may be able to somewhat relate and understand.

I am completely serious about wanting you, and wanting to spend the rest of my life with you, and to completely be yours, utterly, entirely, and completely, if you want me. I hope you have the courage, wisdom and heart to go after whatever truly makes you happiest in life, in whatever form it may be or whatever expression it might take on. This is certainly the sort of ‘prime-directive’ that I have always followed in my life, however sometimes I feel that despite my best of intentions that I have often made foolish decisions by not always being true to myself. But I have very little doubt that whomever you end up with will be the right person and the perfect person for you.

Please do not feel that I am as conceited, nor as presumptuous or pretentious as to suggest that that someone is me. I know for a fact you can certainly do a lot better, for example, someone who was more mentally perfect and less emotionally unstable. While I have always felt that regardless of whatever you may think of me, that it is the content of my message that is important, and while I never wanted anything to take away from that, at the same time the converse is also true. Regardless of the content of the message, of what I write or say, I know that it is easier

to articulate certain characteristics and attributes, but something different altogether to actually possess them and to live them out. Just because I genuinely ascribe to certain ideals does not necessarily mean that is who I currently am.

Furthermore, if you ideally desire someone more experienced in relationships then that is certainly not me. The best analogy that I can think of is that I would be akin to being like the jumbo jet airline pilot that has logged a million virtual hours in the flight simulator but never even flown a single-engine Cessna in real life before.

And unlike nearly every other Asian person that I've ever known, I don't really care about academia, higher education and do not have any work or career ambitions in life. To be honest, I don't even like what I do (Information Technology) and to me it is just a paycheck. If I could get paid the same or more to do another line of work, I could probably care less what I did as a job.

The only thing I would really have to offer you is that if we were able to forge that sort of true emotional link and/or spiritual connection, then I know that probably more than any other person out there that I am capable of feeling more deeply and connecting more strongly than anyone else. And if that something was there, I would have no qualms about expressing it, whether physically, emotionally, verbally or linguistically. As long as the intensity did not overwhelm you, ("excess-within-control"), then I know that very few others could surpass my capacity for emotional depth and empathic love. That is what I've always wanted in life and what I am good at and what I have honed. I would like to believe, from an emotional and experiential perspective, that if you would be willing to get past the initial friction, inertia and frustrations, etc of my emotional flaws and quirks that deep beneath exists something very sweet and good, in a very genuine, immersive and pervasive manner. More than anything, something like this is what I want, and I do not think I would have written to you with what I have written if I did not truly feel that we could share something like this in that way.

I was also being very serious that even if we were married, I would not mind it if you experienced physical pleasure with other men. Let me elaborate on this point. Back in March/April when you wrote back to me nearly every single day, I somehow had the distinctive impression that you were answering what you thought I wanted to hear rather than being completely emotionally truthful and honest with yourself. Although I felt it was very altruistic of you to come out and say that you would not mind it if any long-distance guy that you dated saw another girl or slept with another girl, I always intuitively felt that it wasn't what you really wanted. I think you were just putting that out there because you felt it was the noble stance to take, the most noble thing to do, and you would rather yourself be hurt than to allow your love to turn into a sort of 'selfishness', so to speak. I think you maybe have forced your desire to be truly selfless and used that to help override your natural instinct of wanting someone all to yourself. Maybe I'm wrong about you in that regard, but I've always had this hunch that you were trying to predict what you thought I wanted to hear and at least somewhat tweaking and/or tailoring your answers accordingly. In any case, I know enough about the 'human condition' and how mother nature and physical life really works than to be as naïve as to truly believe that any girl could truly be completely satisfied with being with only one man for the rest of her entire life. If I am wrong, then let me be wrong, but I would never impose any restrictions of any sort. And I would never ask anyone that I was with to do that (to impose that sort of self-imposed restriction on herself) on my behalf either. There are other reasons why I take this stance, and it is not because there is anything physically wrong with me, but it is something I would be willing to share if we got to know each other better.

I want you to know I meant everything I said in the message I sent to you back on the 18th of September. If this is not what you want, or if more pointedly I am not what you want, or someone like me is not whom you are looking for, then I would still like to finally meet you at the Poulsbohemian Coffeehouse – or the nearest coffee shop to where the Poulsbohemian Coffeehouse used to be if it no longer exists – in approximately 30 years from now on Friday, September 15, 2045

at 9:00AM local time. I promise you I'll be there this time. Even if you don't show up. At the very least I'd like to know how you did, if you ever found him, and how it all turned out for you.

If, however, you find all of this to be merely too incredulous – which, given how we started I would not blame you – I offer the following proposals to prove to you my complete authenticity. (but of course, I'm open to suggestions if you have a better idea) In essence, I would be willing and I would be able and be very happy to maintain a perfectly 'asymmetric' dynamic in which we mutually agreed that I alone took on all the 'burden' and 'risks'. Beyond just the physical and financial burdens (to quote how you described the canceled Seattle trip back in April) I would also be the one to take on any and all emotional risks.

For example, I would always come to visit you rather than the other way around. Or alternatively, if you ever wished to meet elsewhere, you would be the one to choose the time, the place and the setting. I would never impose anything on you at any time or for any reason, if you were seeing anyone else it would not be my concern and I would certainly not pry nor attempt to persuade or deter you from continuing to do so, etc. If we took trips or vacations together, I would defer to you where you would most like to visit as opposed to stringing you along to places that I felt you would probably not be too excited about (i.e. DisneyWorld, etc). I would never ask you to write to me unless you actually wanted to do so, but if you never wanted to the do letter writing thing again I would never bring it up. If we were married and you wanted to kneel down together and beside one another with your husband in the bedroom in prayer like how some Christian women/couples do, then I would do whatever you felt was best. I would even go out of my way to get a cell phone or smart phone (something I swore off long ago) if you felt that it would make it more convenient to be able to video, talk or text, etc. And if you got bored or tired of me at any stage or for any reason, there would be no hard feelings and I would want you to feel completely safe and comfortable enough to be that transparent and so very candid.

I really wouldn't even mind if you operated on the basis of a string of contingencies. For example, whenever or wherever you wanted to start, or however slow or small the steps, if A were contingent on B happening first and B was contingent on C and so on and so forth, then we can do a conditional-chain like that. As an example, I would come to visit you in SEA versus you coming to DFW. If that happened the way you expected and you felt satisfied then if we took a trip together, I would go where you wanted to see (Japan) versus something that you might not have a natural inclination for, like DisneyWorld in Orlando, etc. And if something like such a trip went how you expected then we could move on to something else and so on and so forth.

You can hold me to everything I have ever mentioned or said in this letter and the one I sent you on the 18th. If I ever let you down on anything for any reason then you could just call the whole thing off and that will be that. In this manner you could hedge your bets and keep your options entirely open while limiting your potential exposure and/or risk.

Starting now this very moment, I want to prove to you this is not all talk. This is the very last message I will ever send you. If I lied and sent you anything else unsolicited or in any unreciprocated manner after this then you would know I wasn't being serious. You don't have to reply back or confirm one way or another. But I hope you don't mind – and I hope you can understand – given the nature of this message and its contents why I felt compelled to deliver it to you via many different methods and mediums. But again, you don't have to reply back or confirm one way or another. No matter what, I hope you really do find and sustain the happiness that you have always been seeking.

Sincerely,
Bo

Monday, September 21, 2015

September 18 2015 8:43 PM

Nikki,

The sweetest, saddest and most endearing thing anyone has ever shared with me was when you told me that you had already made the decision to be celibate your whole life if you never meet that kind of person that you wanted to be with. I knew you absolutely meant it. What a bittersweet and heartbreaking decision. But one filled with such lovely high hopes.

While you've said you could live independently just fine without a husband to emotionally sustain you - and no doubt I'm sure you can - I don't think that is what you really want. But I can understand that you'd rather have nothing at all if you could not feel certain that you found that kind of strong romantic connection.

Perhaps few people deserve such a love as someone who placed such importance on finding and sustaining that sort of connection; a girl who was committed to finding and selecting the right someone for her for as long as she could remember. Something she long ago picked as always the "one best thing" to experience in life.

It is so very beautiful that you have always maintained the unshakeable feeling that there would be someone who you always wanted to be besides for the rest of your life, someone you were extremely fond of and felt was a remarkable person whom you wanted to spend quality time with and to enjoy that person's presence more than that of anyone else. It is so inspiration that you expressed being capable of feeling this sort of ineffable loyalty to this person even though you've probably never met him and you felt that possibly never would.

I don't know that anyone has ever shared such unique perspectives with me. I grew fonder of you with every re-reading of your letters. I think I finally realized why. I think I was too selfishly obsessed with wanting the thrill and exhilaration of exchanging heated, intimate and passionately engrossing letters back and forth to have truly appreciated what you shared. I'm ashamed to admit but perhaps the deepest reason why I canceled back in April was I felt if you couldn't give me what I wanted (thrill of letter writing) I would intentionally attempt in whatever way I could to deprive you from what I thought you had truly wanted as well. (the potential interaction that might have developed from such an in-person visitation)

You once shared with me that you wanted to live a life that you haven't seen before, not one like a plot to a book or movie that you had already knew the ending to. I've always felt the same way, but coming from a different perspective. Romantic love is the one and only thing that I have yet to experience in life. Believe it or not, I've never done anything, never been in any relationship, never went out on a date, never had sex, never kissed a girl nor even held hands with anyone in that way. In a sense I guess I ended up saving the best for last, even though it was not intentional nor planned.

Although it was not my intent, I have ended up being alone for the first three decades of my life. I think I shared with you I felt that there was really only about 15 to 20 years left of my life until I essentially got basically old and none of it even matters anymore. I never wanted to live to 85 years or older, I always felt that if I could just live a happy life full of love and wonder then even something as short as 50 years would have been more than enough.

I think the word "dating" is a misnomer. I also never liked its connotation nor denotation. The same way I never liked the word "goals". Every girl seems to want a guy who has goals and ambitions in life and who is "going somewhere" but to me it has always been completely arbitrary and meaningless. All backwards. The only thing I've ever wanted is certain distinctive emotional experiences and I felt that everything else

including education, career, money, possessions, etc were merely just means to an end to assist in the creation of such inner worlds and so were the ambitions and goals applied to them. Not that these weren't important, but they most certainly were never the most important. No one ever asked nor talked about the most important things. But I digress. To me 'dating' is a reduction in uncertainty, that is all it is. A process of knowing for sure, one way or another.

If I were ever to come across something real like that, more than just commitment it would also be a sort of identification, realization and awakening. To the sort of life that I've always wanted to live; something I've been waiting for my whole life. The feeling that I've purposefully stood on the sidelines my entire life and now I'm finally ready to jump in... Brimming with excitement and the heart-pounding sensation and the exhilaration of knowing... it would feel surreal almost. In actuality, I think if the real prospect were to emerge and I found and grabbed hold of that then my entire life would instantly and permanently change (certainly from an inner emotional perspective) for the rest of my life and I would never look back nor ever be the same again. I would compare it to being like a sort of metamorphosis, much like a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly. The feeling that all of it is finally coming together in my life and making sense for the very first time. To feel fully activated, like life finally begins for the very first time. And my previous obsession with searching would have shifted gears towards sustaining that love.

To me, all I want the most in life is to be able to slip into a special emotional and experiential realm of existence – that sort of alive inner world – and to be able to feel so strongly about such a bond, understanding or connection. To experience that immersive alive essence of love and existence and to be in that pervasive moment and to stay in that mood forever – for the rest of my life.

Like you, I've searched for a soulmate type of connection my entire life. But my search perhaps was a little bit more analytical than yours. 'Soulmate' is actually probably a bit of a misnomer as well. I use the two terms interchangeably but I really mean 'twinsoul', the concept that there is only ever one other person for everyone in existence. At any early age I was inspired by initiatives such as SETI (Search for extraterrestrial intelligence), and other attempts at contacting alien life like the Pioneer plaques, Voyager Golden Records, the "Wow signal" incident, the broadcast of the Arecibo message, and even movies like Contact (1997 American film), etc. I drew on their inspiration ingenuity in attempts at crafting my very own 'first contact' message and in attempts of finding ways to find that needle in a haystack and searching and listening to any signs of 'her' out there somewhere.

Obviously I was never successful, but throughout the years when I think back to all the things I have tried, some of them now so ridiculous and lame, I realized I put in every effort that I could and I gave it my all. At one time, a premise that I had, for example, I felt that if I was aware of the concept of a 'twinsoul' and if one did exist, and if she existed then she would also have been aware of the same concept. And she too would have figured out that if I existed then I would be aware that she was aware that I was aware of the concept. Then I would try to guess how she would go about finding me, and I would find her that way, and I knew that if she thought the same, she would anticipate my moves and think one step ahead. So I operated on the premise that not being able to actually contact her, assuming she exists and was in the exact same position that I was, what would be the best way to find each other? What sort of common ground could we use to contact each other without first knowing anything about each other? Suffice it to say, I tried it all but I never found her. I attributed to either twinsouls don't really exist, or perhaps she lived and died thousands of years before my time, or was yet to even have been born, etc.

Today I believe that one's 'twinsoul' is actually the other half of one's gender. Regardless of whether or not we are male or female, both genders possess traces of the opposite gender. Males have feminine aspects and well as females have some masculine aspects. We are not completely male or female. Our 'twinsoul' is simply the other half of us, our suppressed gender that is dominated by our primary gender. As far as soulmates, I believe it really just comes down to being about 'very high level of personality compatibility thresholds', coupled with the requisite luck of favorable chance encounters and the necessary component of quality time in which to form and forge the bonds of commitment.

With regards to God, I believe God is simply the "absolute totality of all existence". So in a sense we are all God, or relatives-within-the-absolute 'sub-existing' portions and aspect expressions of him. We are like self-similar fragments of God being aware of its much larger self, but all the while we are still relatives-within-the-one-absolute, and all of us are absolutely needed (every element of the totality of existence no matter how small or trivial) in order for the one absolute to be completeness that it is. I believe my current views and perspectives of God, love, Twinsouls and Soulmates are all harmonious and consistent with one another and in full alignment with analytical and scientific views of reality. But I think I'm finally done searching. If I bump into her serendipitously, then wonderful, if not, then I don't mind being alone.

I'm all yours, utterly and completely, if you want me. In whatever manner or way, and however slow or fast, little or a lot, fleeting or permanent... Some people are willing to give themselves for their country, others for their company, and still others might surrender for God or some noble cause; but for me I knew that I would only ever do it for another person. I want to give up all attempts at control of my life – even down to the very last dormant traces and vestigial remnants – and just devote myself completely to one person with absolute conviction. I've never found anything or anyone worthy of that until now. This is not a hypothetical proposition or a dumb DisneyWorld offer or invite, this is all of me, everything and forever – or for as long as you still want me.

If you want me, there would be nothing that I wouldn't be willing to do for you. For example, I'd move to Seattle, go to church with you, even listen to soul music and eat fried chicken and watermelon. I'd stand with you under the Aurora Borealis, smell the Cherry blossoms together, visit the Galápagos Islands, and take amazing pictures of Orca and other animals and wildlife. I would pick up on your interests and hobbies and assimilate them as if they were my own as they naturally grow on me, and through you I would invariably gain a much fuller and more vivid and meaningful understanding, appreciation and experience in life. Even if doing the exact same thing or visiting the exact same places, I would gain a newfound perspective. I want you and I want this with you and want to want to want all of this and more... something nurturing, protective, comforting... I know with you I would always be alive and feel alive... just to be able to share all of life's multifaceted experiences with you, the good and the bad, ups and downs, all enjoyable and memorable in their own way... I would defer to you as to how many children you want and when – and even something like being a stay at home father for a period of time would not be out of the question. Even though I never cared about things like this, I would respect how hard you worked for your education and career and would never ask that you make any sacrifices on that behalf. I know that if this is something that you want, that with you, you would help me be or become the sort of person that I could never have been on my own despite all my good intentions, and compel me towards the sort of new, different and interesting experiences that I would have not stumbled upon by myself. I would never impose or even imply any artificial or externally imposed restriction or any other limitation on your life, and I would mean that absolutely. I would never see myself being that sort of jealous or possessive husband that deters or prevents his wife from developing meaningful friendships or rapport with other men, or to nurture her friendships and to spend quality time with her family and girlfriends, etc. I would respect your space, however much freedom you needed, whenever you needed it, and without question or exception. Even if you wanted to go as far as experience physical intimacy with someone else I would not get in the way if that truly made you happiest or added to the full palate of your enjoyment of this one and only life that you had

to live. I would never rush you into anything you didn't want to do. You once told me that it made for disappointing experiences when you had to hold back so far from the line just to keep the other person from recklessly barging over it, regardless of what that applied to, as it can apply to so many other things in life, I would do whatever I could so that you could experience the very opposite of that sort of disappointment. Beyond love, or even romance, I would think we could truly help each other live more meaningful and fuller lives in the pursuit of true happiness. Just to start something wonderful, in whatever forms it takes on; and to extend and expand that for the rest of our lives.

Monday, November 9th 2015

Nikki,

Does being financially poor scare or frighten you? You had mentioned that you grew up in an environment that you felt was undesirable and knew that you only had a limited amount of time to make something out of yourself and to fit all the missing pieces of the puzzle together into the way that you wanted. Personally I've never been a materialistic person and I don't really care about things like that. Perhaps when you mentioned that sort of insecurity, maybe it was more than just being about money.

I noticed when re-reading some of your letters and messages that you always capitalized the word 'Time'. Time, like technology, is often a double-edged sword, but I don't think it is your nemesis, Nikki. I never truly viewed Time in an adversarial type of way even when I felt that I could be running out of it. And besides, if I could hypothetically live for all eternity, I'm not quite sure what I would do with that sort of infinity of infinities! There is a sort of "compression effect" in that the more I have to race against the clock, the more 'alive' everything feels. Have you ever heard of the saying that "Water always seeks it's own level"? Perhaps that is why I'm just a big procrastinator all the time, when I know I have all the time in the world I just tend to push things aside, I like doing things last minute because it tends to be more interesting when under that sort of time pressure. I tend to view the race against Time as a challenge not a nemesis.

If I could only have one thing in life, it would be love, but it has nothing to do with Time. It feels more like making a 'timeless' decision or choice, a selection independent of all other external variables and factors; something that I would still have ended up choosing regardless of whether or not I could live for only one more hour, or for another 100+ years. But I like what you shared about placing such an importance on love and selecting the right significant other, because you seemed to have expressed that when push comes to shove and you feel like you

have ran out of time, when you realize you can't get all the pieces of the puzzle to fit, that you'd grab hold onto that sort of love and that it would be enough. That is a beautiful way of looking at it.

Not to sound flippant nor to trivialize anything, but from a biggest picture perspective I've always felt that Time, like money, is largely irrelevant. Money is just a number, one can always make more money, and strangely enough, due to what I coined the "compression effect" one could also in a way 'make more Time'. (without the use of a Time Machine) Under very rare and unique circumstances it is possible for one to experience more in one single perfect day than a whole entire typical year, or even in some cases an entire natural lifetime!

I've always felt it was about Love. Though I've never completely understood what Love really is. Maybe that is because maintaining objectivity while being in love is impossible and the two are mutually exclusive. It is not possible to be subjectively in love and yet still stay objectively in the biggest picture, vice versa. For example, you once told me about the man that you thought you might have fallen in love with when you were younger. I know it didn't work out and I'm very sorry that he decided to leave you, and I know you don't like hypotheticals, but couldn't for just one moment you allow yourself to conceivably imagine that had he actually wanted you in that way and forever, that you might have actually fallen completely in love with him, loved him in that way, and opened yourself and fully committed yourself? If he had wanted you back then, it is possible it could have worked out perfectly for the two of you and you could have ended up with him and lived out such happily ever after, right? I think what may have hurt you the most is that when you felt there was potential like that is that it was indeed his 'choice' that actually robbed you from the very real possibility and tangible chance and potential of falling in love and truly loving him and being loved backed by him.

From what little you shared with me, it seemed like you were in the process of falling in love with him. Whether or not you 'accepted' his decision doesn't really change anything, and likely wouldn't have changed anything. And despite the way you phrased it, I can't imagine that you wouldn't have been deeply hurt by his decision.

But do you ever wonder if only you had maybe expressed yourself better to him, in whatever way he was most receptive to, that he would have seen the real you and been allured and captivated by that? You told me once that you considered yourself "pretty tough at work" and that the way you had written to me was just your "softer side". I'd like to believe that you are someone "soft" who out of necessity has to be tough at work, rather than the other way around, a self-proclaimed tough person who only shows her softness every now and then and even then only ever under the most ideal or perfect of circumstances.

Where I currently work, the boss that I work for is a bona fide "company man". Don't get me wrong, he is a good person and I like him, but I would never want to end up like him. He is 50 years old, about 20 years my senior, and has never gotten married nor does he have any kids or family. To me that seems like such a wasted life. It is one thing if he was searching for his soulmate and never found her, but that is not who he is, he is just so trapped in his work that nothing else seems to matter. I told him since he has so much money saved up, he could quit his job, find a lovely woman and just travel the world getting lost in love with one another and he gave me a look like I was insane and completely out of my mind.

Some of the consultants that I've interfaced with at work have an even more cynical view on love. For example in one instance, there is this 50+ year old man who shared with me the reason he never pulled the trigger and never got married was because he was afraid not only of emotional commitment but more or less that he didn't like the prospect of divorce and having to split in half all of his assets... and other crap like that. To me that is just the craziest reason not to get married. Sure there are bad women out there, but you can tell from the way he described it

that he derives his life's entire worth based upon how much money he has saved in a bank, a number. He told me about how he is saving up a sizable nest for when he retires and I'm thinking how sad and lost a poor soul is he.

Even younger men do stupid things. You know the type of guy who has a girlfriend or wife and maybe even has experienced true love with her, but still decides that somehow it isn't enough, it isn't all that he wants and then ups and goes to put himself in dangerous situations like riding a motorcycle or signing up to enlist in the armed forces, etc... just stupid useless waste of time things like that. I knew then and there that I would never put myself in any position where I would be forced to decide. There is no decision, every single time romantic love triumphs all.

In the movie the "K-19: The Widowmaker" (based on true story) this young Russian soldier who was engaged to be married knowingly goes into the radiation chambers of the nuclear submarine to help fix a leak, knowing that he did not wear radiation suits (none were on board) and that he would end up dead as the result. If he truly loved her, why would he do this to her? If I was in his position, I would rather everyone else on that ship die before I would sacrifice my life and hurt her in that way. Yes this is extremely selfish, and I know it is a huge turnoff for women because it puts too much pressure on them, and because they themselves are not that selfish and thus would not want a guy to go to such lengths for her, but it is always how I've felt and who I am and I can no longer escape from that truth. I can only be true to myself and what I want and how I feel and hope maybe someday I'll come across someone who feels the same way or at least able to accept that about me.

I'm not naive, I know the way the world works. I know what it is all about, I see the biggest picture. I've always felt that only by knowing everything could I have the true freedom to choose what I really want. I felt this way when I was 10, same at age 20, and now I'm 30. I doubt it will be any different at age 50 or 60.

Or you hear stories of young couples who really love each other but due to religious, cultural or familial differences they had to sacrifice that love and couldn't end up together. Btw, this is a common theme in romance movies and love novels. Romeo and Juliet comes to mind. Or "Becoming Jane". Even when I was younger, when reading these books or watching those types of films, I would always wish to get involved with the characters and just to tell everyone to snap out of it, I wanted to share my insight with them and prevent such tragedies from ever taking place. I wanted to show them my unique perspective. I knew that if I was the guy, I would never give up on her, no matter what. That 'God' himself could not get in the way. That when push comes to shove I would sacrifice (if it was up to me) the entire world and indeed all of existence just for her.

And perhaps that is partially why I never found such a connection. Not because I believe God exists and that I'm being punished for my stubbornness, but because ironically by going after it so directly and so intensely it actually backfired on me. The other part of me realizes that romantic love maybe does not actually triumph all. That there are sometimes when even such a true and perfect love may not be enough. And that it may be necessary or unpreventable to need to sacrifice your own happiness and the happiness of even the one significant other that you truly love for that of the greater good.

You know the funniest thing of all? Ever since I was a kid, ever since I could remember, I've done everything possible to not put myself in those situations and it has largely all been for nothing.

I've never found her, I've never even been in a relationship and I've never been in love. I used to look down on people who sacrificed love for work, survival, religion, patriotism, money, children, parents, etc etc etc etc etc; I secretly snickered at all of them, thinking to myself that I was so much better, and feeling very elite/superior about it, that I had the rare insight and courage to go after exactly what it was that I truly wanted the most and that I would never let anything nor anyone get in the way

or stop me. But a heck of a lot of good that did me?

That is why I never became a pilot, I would hate the constant traveling and it just wasn't for me, no matter how much I loved the idea of flying. You know there is a saying that "IT" means "I tried"; Information Technology is the only sector/industry (that I know of anyway) that you can slack off, surf the web half the time and still get paid relatively good money to do so.

It is also why I quit the Marines my first day in bootcamp. Granted, I was only 19 or 20 back then and was still open minded, but that was a learning experience and I quickly knew that even if I never met a girl and remained single my whole entire life, I still didn't want to give up that mere hope and possibility, no matter how remote, for the sake of a country or nation that would never and could never love me back in that way. It is just never worth it, what they make one give. Only people who don't truly value their life would sacrifice it for a social abstraction that could never love them back.

It is also why I only have a BS degree and never went for anything like a Masters when every other Chinese "Bo Chen" that I know of has a PhD or more. I purposefully and intentionally avoided all of that, much to the chagrin of my parents.

Part of the reason why I've avoided religion is because I've always put romantic love above "God". And I didn't like it that God would demand that I love him first and foremost, that I love him best, and that I would have to rank my love for her and put her second place. I wanted nothing to do with him because of his selfishness in that regard. (not to mention he isn't even real and doesn't actually exists!)

It is also why I've never did anything with a girl. Sure I'm physically unattractive, but far uglier guys have had sex or done other physical things with girls before. And honestly its not difficult to find a girl willing to have sex.

It is also why I've never did anything with a girl. Sure I'm physically unattractive, but far uglier guys have had sex or done other physical things with girls before. And honestly its not difficult to find a girl willing to have sex.

I did everything right but still didn't end up with anything.

But I can truly say that I have no regrets.

- Bo

P.S. - Now you know the real me. I've never shared all of this with anyone else before. Not even with my own parents or my brother. Had I shared all of this with you back in April would you still have been hurt or offended by my use of the phrase "waste of time"? My offer to you still stands and it always will, I doubt I'll ever end up with anyone and I'm okay with that. If you ever wanted me (out of your own volition, even if it is because you couldn't find him in time) I would be absolutely willing to make the commitment to give up the aforementioned compulsions for you. I know myself well enough to know that intensity will never go away, it would merely be channeled or transferred. It is who I am, and even if it means not getting what I want, I don't regret or resent that.

Fri 11/6/2015 6:49 AM

-----BEGIN PGP SIGNED MESSAGE-----

Hash: SHA1

Hello Nikki,

After what happened with Protonmail lately, I have for the time being migrated back to StartMail. To prove that it is really still "me" I've sent you this message by piggybacking on a reply/correspondence that we had in March. Additionally, as already mentioned, I'll take a Polaroid selfie while holding up something that proves when the photo was taken, along with the PGP key ID and PGP fingerprint inscribed on the back of the photo. I will digitally sign (via PGP) every message I send to you from now on, whether it is via email or on PenPalWorld, etc.

Have you ever read the Nicholas Spark novel "A Walk to Remember"? It is probably my most favorite romance story of all time. You remind me of the female character in that book. When I first read it nearly ten years ago, I distinctively remember thinking how cool it would be to meet someone like her in real life, just to know that she actually existed, etc. Though I suppose I could be very wrong, but I feel that the two of you seem very much alike, and I hope you aren't offended by my comparing you to a fictional character, it is really meant very much as a compliment. When I'm ready I'll send the book to you via USPS with tracking (don't worry I'm not going to ship triple-redundantly anymore!) and I'll include the Polaroid photo within the same package, bookmarked to my favorite part of the novel. How is that for accomplishing two things in one task!

About Victoria Secrets... Back in March I should never have sent you an egiftcard in such a sarcastic and/or jokingly manner, I realize it was lame, flaky, and perhaps even could come across as a bit mean spirited or hurtful. Honestly, I don't even like Victoria Secrets, it doesn't really fit my aesthetic style or preference. I like juliannarae much better, and I want to do it properly this time and get you the aptly named "Perfect Indulgence

Silk Gown" in purple as a gift. I don't even know your size, so I'll just take a guess and if it doesn't fit you can contact them directly and I'm sure the folks at juliannarae will be able to get it sorted out for you.

I've already made the decision and commitment to come to Seattle on Jan-2-2016 and April-23-2016 and 09-15-2045 if I'm still alive and the world still exists by then, LMAO. I'm not even sure if the coffee shop is even open on January 2nd but if isn't it doesn't matter even if it is closed, I'll probably book a rental home by the bay on Front street on Airbnb and I'll take a stroll or walk around that morning. There are a lot of things I didn't even get a chance to do in Seattle back when I visited around September. So I wouldn't consider it a wasted trip by any means.

My favorite Christmas movie of recent time is "The Polar Express" [2004]. Have you seen it? If not, I'll get you a blu-ray copy of it from on Amazon in time for the Christmas holidays! Even if you have already seen it, you should watch it again! The movie is actually a message to adults while masquerading as something for the kids! The black girl "Hero Girl" reminds me of you, while I see myself identifying with all three of the male kid characters, Hero Boy (cynical unbeliever), Lonely Boy, Billy (detached involvement, vicarious empathy, etc) and also with that pompous, pretentious, "Know it All" geek kid.

As promised, I'll get you the Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II USM Lens as a Christmas present, and if you can't accept it, that is perfectly okay, it won't hurt my feelings. Perhaps maybe you already got a zoom or telephoto lenses, or maybe you would rather not accept any gifts from someone such as myself, but in any case, I'm doing it for you, not for me.

And so lastly, I want to close this message with the following: In skydiving terminology there is something called an AAD (Automatic activation device) which it deploys the parachute for you automatically at low altitude if for whatever reason in case you forget. It is not an ideal situation because it only opens at very low altitudes, when it knows for sure that it is just about to approach the moment of no return. While AAD can save lives, its activation is very dangerous because at such low heights there isn't any time if anything else goes wrong, but the reason it is not set to any higher altitude is because otherwise it would prematurely get in the way (some people like to cut it close). Kind of like an airbag setting off when you bump the car ahead of you at a gentle 2mph and doing more actual harm than good. When you wrote to me back in March/April and told me that if you never found 'him' or someone so special, that you would be 'okay' with being alone/single/unmarried/virgin your entire life, I didn't realize it then but I wanted to say that I'm sure you will find someone perfect for you, and that I really didn't think you had to even worry about something like that, but also that as a worst case contingency, I would offer that whether it is a year, five years, ten years or half a lifetime from now, if you never did find someone like that, you always had at least one option of last resort (as un-idealistic as it may be) and that you can contact me at any time, as long as I hadn't found what I was looking for, I could be that for you, if it makes any sense. And that I would never leave you, nor abandon you, nor forsake you. You never have to live your entire life alone, anyway that is what I wanted to tell you.

- - Bo

Key ID: 66559D3B / 0xD80BA46D66559D3B

Fingerprint: 8DA3 9238 EA06 099B CAFF A1DC D80B A46D 6655 9D3B

<http://pgp.mit.edu/pks/lookup?op=get&search=0xD80BA46D66559D3B>

Nikki,

You may find it hard to believe but not meeting you back in April is probably one of the greatest regrets I've ever had in my life so far though perhaps not for the reasons you might think. I'm sorry I didn't have the patience nor selflessness to help you with the difficulties of expressing yourself. You even told me that what you really lacked was the ability to feel safe enough to expose that kind of vulnerability, and how most of your encounters have ended in disappointment, despite well intentions. As with commitment, I also have a somewhat different view on trust, but I can definitely understand and relate to where you are coming from. Anything easily given tends to be not as valued, being able to earn the trust of someone like you would have been immensely meaningful to me. Even if all we ever did was write to each other, I know we could have continued in sharing such personal collisions and that it would have likely been fundamentally valuable to you, not only in terms of seeing life through a different perspective but also to be truly impacted and changed by it. It would have been a great privilege for me to help you open up and to share such a mutually nurturing friendship. I know it would have made me genuinely happier to have selflessly given you what you really wanted and what you needed rather than to have foolishly chased after and so narrowmindedly pursued what I thought I wanted to see and what was probably never even there. I used to think that if I had felt that I liked you too much I would have control issues and inevitably try to change you; I've realized now that the whole point of having such interactions is to be changed by it, though not the kind of change that is controlling but the sort of change that helps someone be or become the type of person whom they've always wished and intended to be; and that while in the same process I would also have been changed by you in ways I could not have predicted. Had we met today in person facetoface this is what I would have said to you. I know it is a little late, but Happy Birthday Nikki.

Nikki,

Not to sound conceited, but I've always wondered if I had only one chance to write only one letter, and I had to write that one letter that essentially said it all, and I do mean ALL of it, what would it be like? I don't think it is possible, but if anyone could pull it off, it would be 'me'! Please don't respond, you don't even have to read it. But consider it my gift to you. It is completely up to you whether or not you wish to accept (read) it. This one has absolutely zero monetary value. But it did take me essentially the whole weekend to ponder and then type it out, plus I had to draw upon insights that I've thought about and developed my entire life. Unlike giftcards and packages that made you very uncomfortable, I hope you would actually enjoying reading it and that it might in some small and indirect way help you find the vague and general happiness that you have been always searching for... perhaps by giving you a different insight and perspective and perhaps also as a mere frame of reference from which you can solidify and build your own unique inner existence. I didn't edit this for spelling, grammar, syntax, this was a direct stream of consciousness.

In my mind, it is also hopefully my way of saying sorry and making it up to you. I thought about waiting until the end of the year to send it in hopes that you might be more receptive to it at that time, but then I thought against it. Now is as good a time as ever. Einstein once said that "No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.", so rather than give you a cheesy apology, I'd prefer to apologize by showing you that I had nothing to apology for in the first place and that whatever you felt, whether hurt, offended, disappointed, uncomfortable, intimidated, etc was entirely misplaced. I'm not writing to you anymore, this is my final letter. Very simply, I don't think I'll ever be able to top this, because this is it. This is really it. No other letter I'll ever write to anyone or even to myself will best this one. Not to brag but this is probably the best letter written in all of mankind! (esp. considering I think we as a global civilization is on a mathematical certainty of a permanent technological and economic decline)

Have you ever wondered who you are? Not as in what is your name, race, gender or age, but who you really are deep down in your core essence as a person and as a human being? It is something I've often thought about and reflected upon. I've come to the conclusion that ultimately we each define ourselves based on our own concept of selfidentity. We are who we believe we are. Yes, I know that is very much selfreferential and a tad bit too abstract to be truly useful, but I do think intentionality matters and it all boils down to our own perception of reality and also our individual place within it. How we go about discovering or creating who we are is a different matter altogether though.

I would very much like to believe that deep down what makes us unique is our individual subjective perspectives and beliefs in life and of existence. Our special and distinctive way of seeing the world makes us both who we are and who we can become. This is perhaps more valuable and much more so of a meaningful distinction of individual identity than other factors like our age, or where we were born, or our ethnicity or height or income or any number of other external characteristics and analytical overlays. Ironically, what we typically think of as identifying information such as social security numbers, telephone numbers, street addresses, etc are merely tags and labels that albeit provide some measure of administrative convenience to help facilitate the existence of large societies at scale, they do nothing to actually describe, discern or delineate the core characteristics of a person. It is the singular irreducible essence of someone that if removed they would no longer be who they once were and would lose what makes them special. People in witness protection programs who are forced to change their names, addresses, IDs, etc haven't lost their soul, but sadly the same couldn't be said of patients who suffer from Alzheimer's or other memory or identity related illnesses or diseases.

Love is the strongest bond, especially the sort of dyadic interpersonal romantic love that exists between two people, because it is the most direct, most raw and most focused. In terms of core identity it goes straight to the essence of what makes a person who she is, piercing through all the other vanities, attachments, selfdelusions and superfluous things in life. You seem to have already figured that out by yourself and on an intuitive level by coming to both an emotional terms with and by the mental exploratory discovery of what you want the most out of life... but I think there is a very sound objective scientific reason and logical rationale behind why love is indeed the most powerful force in life. Love is the ultimate convergence.

In life, most people take on multifaceted identities, titles and roles. Someone could be an employee, a husband, a father, a friend, a son, a citizen, a soldier, a host or guest, a customer, and many other things to many different people, for example. Sure, these identities are not mutually exclusive and they could have some overlap, but when push comes to shove (in times of internal or external conflict; when life throws a curveball at you, etc) which ones do we cast off first and which ones do we always keep until the very end? When conflicts arise and we have to decide what truly matters the most, which do we tend to first? Love is the only label, the only emotion and the only 'identity' that is capable of transcending all other titles, roles, tags, labels and analytical overlays and overcoming all other boundaries and limitations. (No one would pursue a career at the expense of love, unless he was stupid, because a career is a means to an end, not the end and abstractions such as corporate institutions are wholly incapable of loving anyone back on any level, much less personal level.) This is why love is so valuable and so powerful. It is the most direct connection, the most intimate collision, the most intensely and narrowly focused and densely concentrated essence of being. It is the most 'real'. In essence, love is the single 'most best', most noble and most straightforward asymmetric strategy to obtaining the highest form of happiness in life and it is also the glue that cohesively and coherently holds it all together for as long as possible or the longest time possible. Like you once said, a life without love is meaningless because love is what gives everything else in life meaning. One doesn't

even have to choose between the false dichotomy of following the heart or the brain, because love is both emotionally and logically the best optimized and most efficient route to maximizing happiness.

Have you ever thought "why me"? Have you ever experienced the sensation of being pure consciousness devoid of all other identities and attachments? I've felt that on occasion. Sometimes in the very brief fraction of a moment when I've just barely woke up, before my brain has had time to download my past history, past memories and other identifiers (name, gender, race, personality characteristic and predilections, etc) I exists momentarily in a state of raw direct consciousness, a sort of existential awareness. Not knowing where I am, when I am, or who I am. I am in that moment like an empty vessel just taking in raw unfiltered life and absolute reality as it is. All emotions and experiences being equally valid, new, and fresh. That is perhaps the closest to true freedom or liberation that I've ever felt. Just to exists, and perceive and be ... without the mind or body or ego or other limiting factors, restrictive beliefs, language, thought, etc getting in the way or holding the moment back. I realize that when I lose the identity of what I have known to be "me" or "I" and then take on the new unfettered identity as pure consciousness and awareness that suddenly I am stripped to the very core and have cast aside everything else that would have made "me" unique and distinct from you or any and every other person in the world, and in that state of being "I" exists only as the pure raw consciousness and direct awareness that/which is also the exact same "I" at the very center of every living person and all beings. (some Eastern philosophies have called this 'nonduality', others have called it Christ, God or the 'Godhead', and still others have referred to it as what Buddha meant when he said "the self removed from all attachments", while the scientific community is known as "qualia", or the 'hard problem of consciousness' or the 'ghost in the machine'.... but a rose by any other name is still the same right?)

When I was five years old I was first puzzled by the "why me" question. I wondered why wasn't I born into some other person's body (or even some animal or insect for that matter!) instead of being encapsulated in my very own body? Why these particular parents and why this particular family? Why this era and not in the distance past or way future? Or better yet, why there wasn't some other person in my body (some other selfidentity of a different/other "I/me" that occupied my physical body) and that the "me" of "me" would never have to exist at all, because someone else would take the place of "me" in what was 'my' body and there would be no "I" left over to ask such a question! Basically, why did "I" or the notion of a selfawareness "meidentity" have to even have ever existed at all?! This is not the same as asking why my physical body was born, I'm really asking why the notion of a (my) selfaware "I" got implanted into this particular physical body at all, and not some other "I" so that (me) "I" didn't have to exist at all! Then I wondered, did EVERYONE feel this way about themselves and perhaps we all asked this same question and pondered on this deep mystery? Maybe there was no separation between body and mind and the notion of a specialness or uniqueness of selfawareness was merely just an emotional illusion much like how freewill is an illusion and we only 'feel' that we have freedom of choice when in fact everything is predetermined? Or Perhaps our selfidentities were like isolated islands each marooned on a parallel universe or mentaldimension of its own! If only we could all form a sort of collective psychic neuralconnection then we'd know for sure! Maybe there was only ever one ultimate "I" that was split into all the individual subjective "I"s? I then speculated that in order for the ultimate "I" to know itself or to enjoy itself it had to break up into infinite little pieces and become all the smaller subjective individual "I"s that played this pretend game called life in order so that the ultimate "I" could experience infinite variety in infinite combinations. I imagined that maybe it is the nature of reality to play these 'pretend' games with itself, and that this ultimate "I" was playing pretend with itself as (in the form of) all these people (including me) that didn't really know what the heck was going on and wasn't let "in on the secret", just like the way that I was playing (in a very selfsimilar fashion) pretend games with myself by conjuring up all these wishing thinking dreams and wanting to enjoy it better by forgetting

that I was even pretending and pretending that I was not pretending! And in the ultimate analysis, at the very end, it would be all revealed for what it was, when during the final summation process "we" are all joined back and converge back into the one initial source that started it all? The one and only ultimate "I"? The alpha and the omega, the lion and the lamb?

That is an interesting speculation because ironically as a kid that was exactly what I had always imagined when given the opportunity to daydream to my heart's content. Remember when you shared with me that when you were a kid you daydreamed about jumping from perfect moment to perfect moment? I know exactly what you meant when you remarked that you still wanted to retain your current life and default identity, to have your cake and eat it too. But I took it one step further. To its next logical and final conclusion.... I wondered in addition to being "me" that had all these powers to control my experiences and shape reality and to be anywhere and experience anything and at any time, what if I could also change myself? What if at different moments I actually was someone else entirely? Then my own most coveted wants, desires, wishes, predilections etc in life would instantly change to adapt to all the enumerable different people that I could be or become. Essentially the true "I" was simultaneously no one and yet everyone and all at the same time! (the true "I" was actually the core essence of direct selfawareness and raw existential consciousness that I talked about earlier) I was swapping out "I"s the way you were swapping out "perfect moments". Each subexisting "I" got to experience its own version of "perfect moments", jumping from one to the next! And each and every version, variant, permutation, composite or combination of the different 'me's in all its infinite varieties and infinite combinations would get to enjoy the highest versions of itself(s) by each experience what to it (each of the individual "I"s) was the 'most perfect moments', and an infinite number of them! I got to experience not only infinite perfection but an infinite number of infinite perfections! Like the lyrics from the "These Dreams" song : "Every second of the night I live another life".

You see, I've always imagined that even if I found the perfect girl and shared that perfect love with her, that it would in a way still be arbitrary and capricious in terms of the initial discovery and encounter. I don't actually believe in soulmates in the strict sense that out of 108 billion humans that have ever walked the earth that there is only one girl who is 'mine'. I believe in 'close enough' archetypes that cross a certain very high threshold of compatibility that when coupled with meeting under the right circumstances and sufficient time together to form a bond and nurtured a relationship and some memories together that creates or the forges the unique 'soulmate' experience that we all seek. But the thing of it is, that means I also concede that no matter who I ultimately end up with, even if I do someday find the so-called "perfect girl" or someone like her, I could also undoubtedly have ended up equally happy with someone else somewhere else in the world. To have been in a completely different story, to have shared a totally different life. No matter who I feel attached to emotionally or have professed a mental commitment to, that the rug could get pulled out from underneath my feet in one fell swoop (so to speak) and that my attention, attachment and commitment could just as well very well have been directed towards some other girl and it would be just as real, just as strong and fervent and intense and unique! Even if I kept the same body, and the same "me" identity that I've always known for the past 30 years, sometimes when dozing off between wakefulness and sleep there are brief flashes of a sort of mental 'free association' when my mind wanders off and my mental thoughts somehow seem to grow a brain of its own or take on a life of its own, and I'm in that zone of detached "core identity" where all I perceive is raw consciousness and existential awareness, etc I often get imprints or notions that I'm now somewhere else in the world, emotionally invested, mentally bonded with, and committed and attached with some other girl and all the intense vivid imagery that comes with that (a person who I never meet and don't even know but it feels like that in that moment I've known her all my life!) and in that split second I realize that it is all so arbitrary the people and things we encounter and end up with in life. Had I retained my same DNA but lived in a totally different country perhaps half way across the world, I would undoubtedly have taken on a totally different perspective,

worldview, etc on life and my life paths and life story would be vastly different and would very likely end up with a girl in that region of the world. A completely different life than the one I'm living now. So I finally realize that the only constant, the only identity that never changes, the only thing that always remains the same is selfawareness, and consciousness itself. That paradoxically the true me is who I am when I've detached myself from everything and everyone else, but also I am the true me when I experience everything and everyone. The ontology of zeroinfinity that applies to all of existence itself also seems to apply on a selfsimilar level to the essence of 'me'.

I didn't know it at the time, but even as a kid, when given the chance to choose and wish for whatever I wanted, I was unknowingly make believing that I was 'God' himself! (or if you watch Star Trek, some omnipotent being like 'Q') Some kids dreamed about growing up and becoming this or that, some people dream about winning the lottery, I've always dreamed about experiencing everything and being everyone. Although I like to sometimes hide behind idealism, in another sense I was effectively the most greediest person ever. I wanted it all, I wanted to be it all and then some. To be happiest and saddest, poorest and richestest, etc. Any other experience that deviated from this totality mindset almost felt like settling, like limiting or depriving myself in some way.

I know what you mean by wanting to experience different experiences and not like reading a book that you already knew the ending to or watching a movie that you've seen before. Different story, different life, different perspective and different me. I've always had such a compulsion. It was almost neurotic.

In the end, we are our perspectives on life. There really is no right or wrong way to experience life. It all comes down to value judgments. What we each find most unique. But who are we really? And does it even matter?

Deep down I've always intuited that all life was just a game. I don't mean that everything is a joke or a prank and it is not my intent to trivialize or marginalize anything. I've always had this almost naive pervading sense of solace about all of existence. That no matter what happens or doesn't happen, I can't lose. And the strongest sense of conviction and belief that everything is going to be okay, and that it always was alright. (despite the fact that I know the world as we know it to be is going to hell in a handbasket, i.e. peak oil, quantitative easing, petrodollar hegemony, population overshoot, u.s. false flag ops, climate change, etc etc etc)

I can't pin it down exactly, but it is this sense or feeling that or rather the ubiquitously pervading sense of relief from awakening and realizing no longer having to frantically looking for something when remembered that I had it with me all along. (ever panicked and looked for an important document when you realize all that time you already had it with you in your hand?)

Or like when I've had this weird dreams where my death was seemingly imminent, such as somehow dreaming that I'm on an airplane that had engine and mechanical problems and it is going down and there is no way any of us would survive, etc and then I think to myself (not even knowing that I was dreaming) that this can't (literally) be happening to me and that I snap myself awake right before it hits the ground... The corollary here is that if this was to actually happen in real life, I'd somehow also know with just as strong a conviction that there is more to life than just me in this form. And that I would also eventually snap out of it and 'wake up' from it.

This is why I've never taken life as seriously as most people seem to do. Not because I don't care but because I've always felt there was more to it than meets the eye. I've always believed that no matter how bad it gets, that it would all be okay, because it always was okay and always will be.

I've always intuitively felt that beauty, love and sex was three of the most direct and thus most raw and enjoyable pleasures of life. I came to an emotional terms with this even before I discovered the underlying evolutionary and scientific reason as to why this was the case.

There are any forms of beauty, there is cosmic beauty, natural beauty of planet earth, beauty of all lifeforms in general, and beauty of the human body and form. (for humans, I suppose if I was another animal it would be for that animal species) Specifically I find feminine aesthetic beauty to be most salient (well because I'm a male, I suppose if I was the opposite gender it would be different). Beauty is its own intrinsic meaning and value.

Of course there are many different forms of love, from agape love to platonic love to romantic love. It is hard for me to discern which is the 'best', but unconditional love seems most pure, while romantic love seems less idealistic. However I'd still pick romantic love if only for its inherently dyadic interpersonal nature.

As for lust, passion, sex... this one is more like a raw direct drive, no different from the desire to eat or drink or sleep or use the restroom. It is the most primitive of desires, definitely powerful in an animalistic way like you've said.

I've purposefully left out intellectual pursuits. The neocortex was the last region of our brains to develop and the last to evolve. (in terms of a stacked triune brain structure) I've come to realize that being smart doesn't matter at all (when it comes to enjoying what is most important) and in fact is often times a hindrance and distraction to what one really wants. It is only ever useful in terms of the "means to an end" and outside of that it has little to no utility. In other words, the intellect is a blunt instrument, a tool that serves the heart and not the other way around.

I know this sound cheesy as heck and totally lacking ambition, but my personal goal in life is just to find a girl that I find attractive who likes me back, and just cuddle with her in bed and just be with her and love her and that is all I want.

This is why I've assessed that romantic love is what life is all about... it is the only thing that neatly packages and incorporates all three distinctive pleasures of beauty, love and sex into one grand unified experience. The convergence of all three is what I feel is most gratifying. You might want to check out "A General Theory of Love": ISBN13: 9780375709227

But in the end, involvement is better than analysis, and life is better than writing about life. So I hope you have fun making the best out of it!

Nikki,

When I was a little child I used to be very artistic. I loved to draw and would often spend hours alone sketching airplanes with nothing more than paper, pencil and a ruler. It was my way of expressing my desires and daydreaming and fantasizing about certain ideals. And it was also a childhood dream of mine to someday grow up and become an airline pilot. This was when I was around five years old, and it was before our family had our first computer. There were no desktop flight simulators back then and I suppose drawing airplanes on paper was my own way of pretending and imagining I was a pilot and a means for me to feel like I got a bit closer to what I loved.

I remember at the time we lived in Austin and my father was going to graduate school of pharmacy at UT. He would often work late into the evenings and nights and our family (my mother and myself; my younger brother hadn't been born yet) would accompany him in the research labs while he was conducting experiments and finishing assignments. The lab had a monochrome Apple Macintosh computer and to pass the time my mother would use the computer to play games that were stored on the large floppy disks. Since I had little else to do there, I would often spend my time drawing, and one of my favorite things to draw was commercial airliner jets.

Even back then I was already obsessed with this notion or ideal of 'perfection'. I wanted my paper airplane drawings to be absolutely perfect. I could never get it exactly perfect so I would always start over from scratch, if I made a mistake somewhere along the process instead of using the pencil eraser I would crumple that sheet of paper, toss it into the trash, and get a clean sheet, a blank slate and a new start. To me it felt like using an eraser was settling or conceding to imperfection, because the eraser marks would always be visible reminder that the drawing was flawed. I was never able to end up with a perfect drawing. Even at that age I somehow knew it was counterintuitive to be starting over all the time, because most of my time had been spent starting over rather than actually enjoying the act of drawing.

So I had to force myself to set aside my obsessive compulsion in order even to finish any drawing at all. The whole thing felt so neurotic and it took a lot of mental effort to follow through and see a drawing all the way to the end despite knowing there were ample imperfections along the way. I think this is something that has pretty much followed and haunted me my entire life, and would serve to explain all the mental 'restarts', 'resets' I've ever done and why I start things but seldom finish them.

Have you ever read or heard of the THE SONG OF WANDERING AENGUS by W.B. Yeats? I was reminded of it recently when watching a Star Trek Enterprise episode ("Rogue Planet") on netflix. It is about a man who catches a fish that turns into a beautiful woman with "apple blossoms in her hair". She calls his name and then vanishes and the man spends the rest of his life searching for her; for this "glimmering girl" that was his vision of perfection that he could never quite find.

In some ways all my life I've thought about and imagined the 'perfect woman' and perhaps she has been deeply etched into my heart and imprinted into my mind. Even though objectively I know she would probably want nothing to do with me if such a perfect woman actually existed and we bumped into each other, subjectively I believe that I alone conjured her into some sort of existential existence, however illusive or intangible that that might be. Even if I never meet her in person and I don't really think I ever will I still feel like I've known her all my life; and this has probably influenced me and has been on my mind in more ways than I could realize.

After you wrote back to me for the second time (the second message you sent to me) in which you mentioned that you spent a lot of time looking for the man that you wanted to end up with and that you felt this sort of loyalty to him even though you've probably never met and possibly never will, I intuitively knew you were someone very special and also felt that you wrote so extremely well.

It is funny because I think I've always felt the same way and I think your letter reminded me of all of that again.

I don't think I ever shared this with you, but even before I wrote you to on April 10th to cancel the Seattle trip I had been for probably two weeks before that already debating and struggling with myself on whether or not I should come or if we should even continue writing to each other. It wasn't because I felt you didn't write well (you are one of the best I've ever written) nor because I felt Seattle trip was too much trouble (that was probably just an excuse I was telling myself) I think I was afraid that if we met in real life and if everything went well I was scared of having to "settle" for someone who was not 'her' that I had envisioned and imagined in my mind. But more than anything I knew it wouldn't have been fair to you because I knew how much you wanted to find the perfect one for you, etc. I don't wish to in any way sound presumptuous nor come off as being conceited but back then I felt that if everything went well, I would have to end up having to reconcile who you were against who I had felt she might have been and to have come to emotional terms with that and to be okay with it forever. And truthfully I'm not sure what I would have eventually mentally picked.

I felt it might have been easier for me to simply delete my PenPalWorld profile and terminate my startmail account (echelon) and by doing so I would never write to you nor would I ever hear from you again. And this is exactly what I did actually, on the weekend of April 4th. Just because I purchased a ticket didn't mean I had to follow through, and although I knew how utterly crappy it would have been of me to suddenly and abruptly disappear on you like that without even so much as saying goodbye or offering a reason or rationale, selfishly it was the only way I felt I could do such a clean cut and not become too entangled or engulfed into the whole thing.

Anyway, I don't know why and can't explain it but I changed my mind over the weekend and the following Monday around 4/6 I had created a new PPW profile along with a new email account and contacted you back again asking if you'd still like to meet up.

I don't think I could live with myself if I actually did something so crappy so I had to contact you back again in case you still wanted to meet.

The incessant back and forth thing wasn't something that you did or did not do to cause it, it was all me, an internal struggle and debate that I had within myself. But I'm sorry if it scared you, or intimidated you, or caused you discomfort.

The real reason why I posted our correspondence online and as a torrent had absolutely nothing to do with what you probably imagined. It wasn't to scare or intimidate you. I'm sorry to say but you were indeed way off on that one.

I didn't expect AA to cancel my flight at the very last moment that day. On flightaware it showed that particular flight had flown ontime without cancellations for at least the last 33 consequential flights/days before my scheduled flight without any hiccups, and I had no reasonable expectation or any reason to believe that mine would be any different. I would have made it had I been on the 4PM rather than the 6PM departure that day, because the storms in DFW didn't even develop to such strength until after 5PM. For someone who was so paranoid and believed in redundancy I wasn't paranoid nor redundant enough in this case. What I should have done was arrived in Seattle two or three days early and/or booked three different flights each on a different airline. The reason why I was caught so unprepared was because in truth I was still debating with myself whether or not I even wanted to come all the way up to the final hour when I had to leave work and head for the airport. When I finally made my decision just to find that choice taken away from me, that is why I felt such disappointment in AA canceling the flight.

I was so relieved when I heard back from you and when you still agreed to be penpals. But I knew that it wouldn't be the same and that you were not going to write back and share the sort of vulnerabilities that you had once shared with me before. Sure, I was impatient, but more than that I felt like you were crawling back into your shell and that you

would probably never feel comfortable or safe enough to ever write back to me in that way ever again. Effectively, I got two captivating weeks of exhilarating correspondence but I knew that in all likelihood that was all I was ever going to get from you. I also felt had we meet in person, maybe you would have continued writing to me like that again.

So I had felt it would have been easier for me just to delete everything, permanently purge every last trace and record of our correspondence and just to forget you, forget what you wrote, forget all of it and move on. I knew that was the very last chance I had to mentally get over this whole thing.

But that is not what I ended up doing. Instead I ended up taking exactly the opposite course of action. I collected and compiled everything you ever wrote me and archived it so that I would never be able purge it even if I wanted to delete every last word and forget it all. That is the real reason I hosted it on the torrent sites, Internet Archives, and burned archival MDISC copies sent to others. So that even in 30 years from now if I wanted to I always would have the option and/or choice to go back and read what you shared with me and to think back to that time and what I was doing in my life back then and be able to wonder where you were or how you turned out, etc..... I never wanted to forget, and so I felt by posting a permanent record was the only way.

Anyway, for better or for worse, I know now that I'll never be able to forget, even if I wanted to.

I'm still reading that book, I'll be finished by late October or early November. I'll share it with you after I'm done and I hope you might enjoy it.

Life can be very simple if we allow it to be. I think when it comes down to it, it is the emotional aspect of perfect love that I cherish the most. How it feels like to be in that moment with that special person. The essence of such interactions and relationships on a purely emotional level... it is about a sort of presence and closeness that transcends mere words and even thoughts. I feel it is enough, because if it is not, then I know nothing else ever will be either. I've always imagined a sort of unconditional, selfless and sacrificial sort of love. Someone who loves me for who I am, even if it was like being freely given an undeserved gift that I was totally not worthy of accepting. A love that while undeserved, is equally as inspiring and uplifting... not controlling or stifling but somehow nurturing and guiding with a glimmer of that sort of beautiful feminine nudge, so tender and endearing and in a lovely 'wishing' and hopeful romantic kind of way. A love that transforms me into being or becoming the type of person that befits the gift bestowed upon me. Sometimes it feels like finally 'coming home', finding that much coveted solace and serenity and being able to rest and bask meditatively in the shade of such deliverance and absolution. Just to get to know her and be with her. To be lost in the wonderment and essence of that moment; totally instinctive, intrinsic, natural and seemingly effortless. It is indeed a very particular and distinctive mode of existence, zone of awareness and unique state of being. Like being permeated with a ubiquitous and pervasive afterglow that was eternally softly gentle and gingerly. Other times I would imagine it could also feel like an exhilarating rush, to run away with her (figuratively) and never look back externally everything in my life can remain exactly the same but subjectively everything is forever changed..... when the days all become a blur and I feel like a moment can be extended to become an entire lifetime and likewise a lifetime encapsulated within a singular moment. A life full of uncontrollable laughter, intimate teasings, engrossing conversations, sensual playfulness and such undulating joy, overflowing pleasure and rivers of happiness... where illusion and reality collide and coincide and true meaning of love and friendship become known once and for all..... That is what I've always wanted and dreamed about in life. I'm fortunate in that I've been able to know and feel that way about love. It's who I am and who I want to be. Being able to find that in real life is merely the icing on the cake, so to speak.

The very last time you had written to me, you told me that you felt you were a unique individual. In my subsequent reply back I did not mean to trivialize your subjective uniqueness when I stated that everyone, everything and every moment is unique. You are one of the most unique people I've ever come across.

It was quite refreshing to hear you say that your commitment to God and your loyalty to your soulmate or future husband was more of an ideal or pledge to yourself, one that you found internally harmonious, rather than to God or to 'him'. Such raw honesty is rare....

What if the perfect man for you lived out his entire life thousands of years ago? Does he not count simply because you never met him and never even knew he existed? Would you have considered it "settling" if you had merely found and committed to the most perfect one for you on Earth but confined to the present day? Or is there a measure of a very high threshold of compatibility that when crossed is locked in and considered "good enough" for all intents and purposes? In that the first person that you came across that you identified with as sharing such a strong connection is or becomes the one who you are forever committed to?

Love, like the notions of specialness or uniqueness, is a selective shifting of awareness and a filter focus in consciousness. It is really about emotional bonding and attachment for its own sake. It is not possible to fall in love or be in love without being at least a little bit subjectively biased. It is perhaps these inherent biases that we project onto the objects or persons of our affections, making us obsessed and creating the states and conditions of "love" or "specialness".... I don't believe we can be objectively in love with only one person, conversely nor is it possible to be subjectively in love with everyone at the same time.

I agree with you that love, like commitment, is also a decision and a choice; albeit often a rather arbitrary and capricious one, or at least for the initial encounter and first contact. So is it really any one person or individual that is special or unique when we say that we like or love him or her, or is it really the subjective attachment and bonding and mental shift and selective focus that we project towards that one singular person that makes us feel that way? I'm undecided, although deep down I want to believe there is something magical about it all.

Compatibility by itself isn't enough. It is also what you do with it that counts. The dynamic of any interpersonal interaction is never static. People impact, share, and nurture and grow into one another. So over time it is possible to form a uniquely particular and distinctive bond that is irreplaceable and unforgettable. So in a very real sense, 'soulmates' are forged, rather than found. What truly matters is the intertwined growth and the intermingling of which is the foundation and base that the rest of the relationship is built upon. And therein lies the true value or utility of exclusivity, commitment and loyalty and trust. It is perhaps to serve as structural boundaries, high level guidelines and reminders of our intent to build, create and forge such deeply intense and expansive, pervasive and vast emotional connections and interpersonal collisions.

Love, being a form of commitment, which itself is a sort of decision and choice, should only be selectively applied towards those interactions that hold the highest potential for capacity of development in terms of emotional maturity, breadth, depth and raw intensity. I think I understand why you are so careful with regards to who you share your vulnerabilities with. In a very real sense, it is quite literally about building dreams, creating the subjective fabric of existence by shaping and manipulating our thoughts, feelings and emotions and using these emotive experiential constructs to weave such emotional tapestries of the stories and moments of our lives.

But beyond love, commitment, loyalty and trust I feel that it is perhaps this form of vague and general happiness that we are all seeking. Perhaps happiness unifies everything. But maybe it was never about unification. What is so wrong about enjoying life in a piecemeal manner? To me it is all a play of words anyway. Love can be very beautiful in its own way, but does beauty always invoke love itself? Love can be viewed as a form of happiness, but it is also possible for happiness to feel like one particular form of love? (For example, like so happy with life that you are in love with all of existence itself, etc) So is happiness a form of love or is love a subset of happiness? Physical pleasure makes one very happy, but what connection does pleasure have to do with love? Or beauty for that matter?

Life is so fleeting anyway... that is why I usually take whatever I can get when I can get it. However it can be maddening (in a figurative way) almost, because sometimes some of the experiences that we want are mutually exclusive and logically impossible contradictions!

For those of us who have issues with emotional regulation (myself included) I suppose we make rules to control the otherwise uncontrollable. I suppose it is a functional dysfunction that we have to come to emotional terms with, in that it helps us deal and make sense of the otherwise chaotic and senselessness and confusion of it all.

I like your bright line rule of maintaining celibacy into adulthood. Really. Even as a guy myself I still think it is very admirable and I wish more girls were like that. I have a sort of litmus test of my own, it is similar in that regard to your notion of a "one best thing" doctrine. The test is I ask myself if I could only ever have one thing in life and have it be forever "enough", what would it be or equally as important what wouldn't it be? After playing many hypothetical scenarios in my mind, I quickly came to realize that no physical object nor material possession would ever be enough, not even any collection or set or combination or arrangement of physical objects or material possessions would be enough. I knew that it would always be left wanting more, be left feeling empty and asking myself "so this is it?" Not being a religious person, I still can't help

but think of John 4:14 "But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." Don't get me wrong, it is great to have nice things, but it is and can never be "it". I came to the very same conclusions with regards to money, career, social status and even education level and/or intellect. I knew whatever it was, it must be something relational or interpersonal. For example, if I was religious, God would be enough. If I found my soulmate, she would be enough. At times I've even felt that exceedingly breathtaking feminine aesthetic beauty would be enough. So would jumping from perfect moment to perfect moment. Perfect love would also be enough...

I hope you had a great birthday. I feel sorry about all the wildlife and animals being harmed or displaced by the wildfires, it reminded me of what you said about living life while doing as little harm as possible. That is a truly great way to live life. :)

When you first told me your name was Nikita I had initially thought you were Russian. Only later did I find out that you were roughly 25% African American (black). All in all, being 25% Black and 75% White actually makes you more unique and interesting. I'm not saying it just to say it. Due to the way dominant and recessive genes work, any girl who is 50% white/black is essentially thought of by society and by others as a black woman. At 25% or 12.5% she becomes more or less a balanced hybrid mix where it can go (fall) both ways. I suppose you take pride in being all that you are, but I also wonder if it ever causes you any conflict in terms of identification of who or what you really are? Is there like this element of an inner struggle?

For me, I feel like caught between two different worlds and not truly belonging to any one of them. While I was born in China, I came over to the USA at age 5 and had to learn a new language all over again. Objectively, a US citizenship doesn't mean anything, it is the genetics that counts. While the US likes to pretend it is a melting pot, I'm not so naive as to not see that at the end of the day it is basically a white mans world and all the minorities just live in it. When push comes to shove I have no doubt that people like me would get rounded up in concentration camps much like the way Japanese Americans were during WWII after Pearl Harbor. Race places a huge difference whether we like it to or not. During times of plenty and stability it isn't as much of a concern, but I know that when/if everything "hits the fan" so to speak, these differences quickly come to the forefront. It doesn't even have to be geopolitical, just look at something as regional as Katrina and how the blacks were treated like animals by the government and those in power.

There are many other layers and elements to all of this as well. Love and romance is not "equal opportunity" and it never will be nor should it be. I've noticed typically a lot of white girls are not attracted to nonCaucasian men, and more specifically, they are usually even less attracted to Asian people. I don't think that is shallow or superficial in any way whatsoever, it is merely a genetic mating preference that is inherently hardcoded and deeply rooted. For example, while I've thought Asian, White and even Hispanic women were attractive,

I've never really felt anything for Black or Indian (India, not native American) women. It is not me being racists, it is just the way it always was or how I've always felt about that. Romantic love is deeply personal and inextricably subjective so I don't really have a reason nor feel that I need a justification other than that is just how it is for me. I'm sure for others it is the same or similar way.

Language influences our thought patterns and restructures the brain. Every language has its own unique flavor, variance, mood, tone and structure and so many idiosyncrasies and nuances and such. There are some words and phrases in some languages that simply cannot be adequately translated nor conveyed into another language and vice versa. So in a way, languages confine our thoughts and limits our consciousness. There is so much that I can't put into words. This is why sometimes even being in the presence of someone without speaking at all can convey so much. I know for you it is touch, but for me it is probably something more or less visceral, aesthetic, visual body language and that sort of stuff.

I don't really identify with being Chinese or Asian because all of my thoughts are structured in English. You know that quiet inner voice when you are lost in your own thoughts or thinking to yourself? I always think in English and I don't identify with being Asian at all. At the same time every time I look into the mirror I'm reminded that I'm an outsider living in a stranger's land and had it not been for my own parent's selfish pursuits of wanting a better life (materialistically) I would not even be here today.

Most Asian guys are so lame, if I was a white girl I wouldn't be attracted to any of them myself; but at the same time that is not meant to mean that I'm somehow not Asian simply because I don't identify with being one, genetics after all doesn't lie and can't change. It is just that I truly feel that I don't fit in anywhere at all.

How do you reconcile your inhibitions against your natural desires? Is the black part of you more intense, animalistic and 'sinful' and the white part of you more cool, controlling, conservative and judgmental? Do you sometimes find this dynamic overwhelming? Do you sometimes find this dynamic interesting and compelling?

Do you ever wish you were completely white rather than mixed? I'm almost certain you would not want to be completely black? Black girls have it tough because even black guys prefer nonblack girls. When I was a kid, visiting family back in China, even my grandma used to joke (thought I'm not sure if she was joking or being serious) that I better never marry a black girl because she didn't want a black baby)

I think it all makes you more unique and special, because at the end of the day there is only one Nikki. You are exactly and precisely who and what you are. I don't think race matters at all in/on a subjective individual level. Do you remember that scanned pdf article that I sent you way back in April that talked about if given enough space/distance (10^{100} meters or something) that eventually everything starts to repeat itself? And that there is another Nikki somewhere way way out there? I know the math, but I was just kidding, I'm not sure I actually believe in that.

I know love doesn't exist in a vacuum, not even the idealistic and hopeless romantic kind. I think I also know how the world really works, and I'd also like to believe I know in general what girls really want. I think deep down what a guy really wants is to be able to give a girl exactly what it is she really wants (not just what she says or thinks she wants).

There is not a lot I envy in life. I wish I was (much more) perfect, but only based upon my own highest and most idealistic definition of true perfection. So I would envy that sort of man, if he even really exists. (I'd like to think he does, and if not, I'd like to someday become someone like him)

Love is an emergent byproduct and happy go lucky sideeffect of a life well lived, not something to be extracted and enjoyed in standalone isolation. Imagine being out dark at night and you are straining to see this tiny but intense beacon of light way in the distance, if you look at it directly it will probably blind your ability to truly see it, and it is only when you look at it from the side of your vision or in a sort of peripheral way that you are able to truly discern what it is and make it out. Often love works the same way. When one goes after it directly it suffocates and burns out; the only way to sustain it is to feed it, flame it and enjoy it indirectly. I think this is why so many women subconsciously are attracted to men that have that sort of 'ambition' and guys who are career oriented and not only excel at what they do but truly find satisfaction and pride in their line of work. Like love, perhaps in that context a romantic relationship is at best also an emergent byproduct and happy go lucky sideeffect of a life well lived, one filled with other things like a successful career, a deep sense of satisfaction and accomplishment professionally and in personal terms a life well lived outside and independent of romance, relationships, or love... I don't think women actually want any guy to actually make her THE priority in his life, I think it would be too intense, too intimidating, too much pressure, and to be frank probably offputting for the woman. What they really want is to add to his life and to complement him, to in essence 'go along for the ride' and not to be the destination.

I understand all that and more, but the problem is that it is not me, and it is not even who I wish to be or become.

If I could imagine the perfect man, he would be someone who was completely cognizant of all of the above. He would be successful, passionate and excel at everything he did, professionally and personally. But deep down he would never lose sight or focus of what he really wanted the most, and it never had anything to do with any of the rest of that. From the outside and in all external appearances he would be like all the other driven, motivated, ambitious and/or successful men, but on the inside only he knew the secret, that he was different and he was aware of something that none of the other guys even knew they wanted.

Even though he figured it all out and knew what it was he really wanted out of life, he went ahead and did all the other things and excelled at all the other 'means to an end' anyway; perhaps to prove to her and in some ways to prove to himself that he had what it took. Almost like as if he was saying something to the effect of : "okay, I jumped through all those hoops for love, for you, now that I proved to you and to myself that I can and did do all these things and more, can we put all that aside and finally get to what really matters?"...

In essence I believe it is the combined juxtaposition that matters and that makes it so interesting and rare. It is not enough to say empty words without the actions, achievements and accomplishments to back it up, (after all, any loser on the street can talk about true love) but it is also not enough to be successful without willing to give it all up. Success without real love is just as meaningless. What did the Bible say about it being easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God?

The perfect man is the sort of man who not only had it all (not only materialistically but also character, personality, etc) but was willing to set all of that aside and give it all up for love or for someone who truly captivated him, etc. And he probably would do it in such a way that she didn't even know what was really happening, so as to not

scare her away. THAT is what is so rare and infrequently found. But to him it would have all been worth it, it would have been a rather easy decision, because to him SHE would have been even more rare and infrequently found.

You mentioned on your pen pal profile that you loved to write fiction. Will you do something? If you haven't tried something like this already, will you write a short story about exactly and precisely who and what 'he' is like and accompany it with an most ideal circumstance under which you met him and fell in love? I've always myself wanted to do something like this, but I never got around to writing it. If you want, we could maybe even swap stories someday.

For me, the perfect man would be someone who knew he was a hopeless romantic even as a little boy, but when the little boy grew up he realized how the world really worked, he conformed and did everything he was supposed to do and even excelled at it, but deep inside he never let go of what truly mattered to him and what he really wanted the most. Then one day he finds her, and he realizes this is it, he finds the truth and the truth is he would happily put on such a mask, in order to get close enough to her when it wouldn't have mattered anymore and then he could finally take it off without scaring her away. He would in the process give her exactly what she wanted, what she thought she wanted and later on what she really wanted and needed. (these aren't necessarily the same thing) All his life everything he did was to build these facades, these necessary jumping through hoops just to position himself so that if he one day met that someone special he would have the ability and opportunity to finally at long last tear them all apart and cast them all aside until one by one they are all set away until the only thing left is himself, completely exposed and empty, exactly who he was before all of this whole thing even started. Coming home and coming back full circle, but he wasn't alone anymore, because this time he had her.

I really like what you wrote about identifying happiness as your life's pursuit and not just about actions or states of being but also dedication to identifying and figuring it out what all that means. Sometimes I almost feel like that if I could only figure it all out, I'd be just as happy knowing what I wanted even if I never had it. Not so much in the sense that "hope" of it being possible is enough, but in the sense that being able to sort out, and to know and identify what I want out of life is immensely pleasurable and valuable and meaningful in its own intrinsic and independent way, at least for me.

I didn't want to wake up the rest of my life to a face that I didn't find attractive. And then always have to wonder what if I had never settled and having to live with the regret of not finding someone who was both absolutely beautiful on the inside and out. Those were some of my thoughts back in March and early April, had I not written them down or committed them to memory I would not even recognize the state of mind of the person who felt that way back then I was so heartless, superficial and cruel. I'm ashamed of who I was and how I felt because I really do like you a lot.

Like you, I don't mind being alone. I've always felt that I'd much rather live the rest of my life alone than be with someone that I didn't feel strongly for, or in a relationship that was lukewarm or mediocre. It would be sad but I think I would be okay.

Feminine aesthetic beauty has always been something that captivated me. A lot of guys just want to get laid or have sex, I never cared about that. Personality aside, all that ever mattered to me (or so I thought) was how physically beautiful a girl looked. Like lust, but pure beauty. Feminine aesthetic beauty is perhaps the only thing that truly scares and intimidates me. I am completely emotionally devastated by it. Part of it is because one of my greatest insecurities is that I find myself to be very physically unattractive. I wanted a partner to compensate. The other part was as a very young child I think I always found my mother to be extremely pretty and that sort of imprinted on me that whoever I ended up with should be as beautiful if not even more so than her. So that is what I've always looked for in terms of physical aspect.

Even from an artistic standpoint I'm just so very sensitive to that form of beauty, more so than probably any other guy in existence. After you agreed to remain penpals, I messaged you after April 27th asking for your help in this dilemma and wanting your input and opinion but you never wrote back and I felt offended that you ignored me on this when I really genuinely wanted and needed your help. If you had come to me asking me to help you with any emotional issues I would never have turned you away, even if I felt that I would get nothing out of it.

Because I started the whole thing with a string of hypotheticals and later went back and forth so obsessively and changed my mind so many times, I don't expect you to believe anything I say. I know there is nothing I can say that will be taken seriously and I don't blame you. Sometimes I don't even trust myself in terms of my own convictions of what I really want.

As mentioned in the previous letter, I'll be there in 30 years regardless of whether or not I ever hear back from you again or if you ever show up. This is something I'm doing for myself as much as it is about you. If I ever come across someone like you again, I know now what I would do. I hope you find the man of your dreams, a guy who truly deserves a special someone like you, and that he never hurts you or breaks your heart.

I've been thinking about what exactly is the best way to live the happiest life possible. Happiness being so broad can often encompass a multivaried array of distinctive feelgood feelings. Just like marriage is but one small component of romantic love, true love itself too is merely a tiny speck in the larger vastness of the totality of pleasure, happiness and life. If one were to be completely honest with oneself, there is admittedly so much more out there, almost seemingly innumerable varieties of distinctive and particular experiences to be had and seen and the countless ways they could be combined and enjoyed and the infinite permutations thereof. Where to even start?

But alas so much of life is effectively wasted due to a lot of the foolish choices and decisions we all make and the many selfimposed rules and restrictions that we have that artificially limit our ability to optimize and maximize our total capacity for the enjoyment of life. I find this to be true regardless of whether it is in regards to our immediate day to day life such as the moment and the present now or if it is life when taken as a whole in aggregate in its totality. In life there is always opportunitycosts no matter what, even if we live a perfect life and made all of the so called perfect choices, there will always be that "what if" lurking in the background and some tinge of regret for paths taken at the expense of others that were not. But I just want to live life in a way that when I come to the end of it, and if given the chance to look back and reflect upon it, I would have or at least feel that I have the least amount of regrets.

What are some of the best asymmetric strategies and tactics to pack as much variety and intensity of happiness and to weave that into the fabric of our own life stories in the most holistic way possible? And to fill all the idle time or slackspace with an assortment of interesting moments and experiences utilizing a combination of both ad hoc and well thought out methods? We sometimes live in a prison of our own devices with some of the nonsensical rules and personal policies that we make for ourselves. Part of this is because it is easier to make brightline rules rather than to judge every situation on its own merits or on a casebycase basis. The best compromise here would be to use brightline rules for the routine and trivial aspects of life (which happens to be the vast majority

of decision-making that we call as habits and such) and reserve the more demanding and mentally draining casebycase analysis for only the most important and major life decisions. While wearing a seatbelt is a rule that we should all follow blindly and without second thought, the same application would not be prudent when it comes to things like what type of car to drive or which job to take or where to live or whom to marry, or how many kids to have, etc.

It is probably cognitively challenging for most people to discern when they are using rules and selfimposed limitations as a clutch, and when it is truly helping them to move forward in life by setting the appropriate boundaries and structures and goals so that they can truly grow, nurture, shape and enjoy and get the most out of life in the both the short term, and the intermediate and reasonable long term. I don't think this has as much to do with wisdom, courage, or commitment, but more so to do with the fact that we just aren't as insightful, reflective and introspect and understanding of ourselves and our own innermost desires, needs, wishes and wants as we would like to think we do.

I mean in the very long term we are all dead. We all start and end the same way by coming into this world alone and by leaving it alone. It is the intermediate and all the interim "inbetween" moments that are truly the differencesthatmakeadifference. With regards to the meat and potatoes of life, there is indeed a very real "time value of life" just as there is a time value of money. All meaning, all value all potentiality and possibilities and even life itself has a shelflife, because existence exists only when perceived through our subjective eyes and of course we are all subject to the adversarial nature of time. So long term thinking is good, just so as long as it is within a meaningful long term and not one that is so farfetched into the distant future that our health and age would never let us effectively actualize. The real goal is about hitting the sweet spot in life and staying in that zone for as long as possible.

I feel that it is a false dichotomy of dualities to have to choose between either short term enjoyment or long term objectives. Many things in life require finding that delicate balance and I prefer the hybrid approach of having overarching long term directives in the backdrop of one's life while at the same time having the flexibility of short term pleasures and rewards interspersed intermittently throughout. It is not an either or and they don't have to be mutually exclusive.

When I was younger my parents would pressure me a lot in terms of school and grades. The idea was to study hard and make the necessary sacrifices when I am young so that I can reap the rewards and benefits and better enjoy life when I'm older. On the surface that makes good sense, which parent doesn't want the best for their children? But of course everything has point of diminishing returns. Asking me to study the whole entire day prior to a major exam was effectively counterproductive regardless of whatever good intentions my parents might have had. They had no idea of the way the brain or body works nor that there was a very real diminishing returns in terms of knowledge retention when it came to studying extra long hours. What ended up happening is that after no longer being able to cram any more into my brain I would eventually pretend to study to make them happy by obediently sitting at my desk but zoning out and staring off into space and daydreaming about different things as a means of mental escape. I never got the benefits of studying the extra long hours, while always watching other kids enjoy their weekends and pursue their interests, hobbies and passions. Had my parents known about and applied the optimal study habits and learning strategies I would have likely ended up not only with better grades but also I would have had a more enjoyable childhood and being happier in the sense that I wouldn't have wasted so much time idling for nothing. The saddest part was that it wasn't even a worthwhile sacrifice because I got absolutely nothing good out of it in return.

Even in adulthood so many people make the same mistakes, even when they are seemingly in control of their own life and make their own so-called rules.

Take marriage for example. Sure from a biological and evolutionary perspective I know EXACTLY how mating, reproduction, life, etc works.... But largely that is not the point. Why do spouses demand that their partners be completely emotionally and physically faithful to them (there are admittedly different motivations involved for the different genders) and make such a big deal out of it when there is a very good possibility that somewhere down the road one or both persons would naturally become bored (especially during a lull or rough patch) of the other and would be in a state of mind of not even caring about that anymore? Wouldn't it be more effective to let the other person seek whatever it is that they feel is missing or lacking in their life when such a situation arises and without trying to control him or her or to put them in a sort of cage? To me this isn't merely about being selfless but much more so from the perspective of knowing and acknowledging there is more to life and love than just always being with one person forever, exclusively and without fail.

I'm not for example hinting at or suggesting what most people come to refer to as a sort of 'swinger' lifestyle or open marriage. I just feel very strongly that the strict rule of only ever having just one person for the rest of one's life, without regards to any other circumstances or contingencies seems like one of those dysfunctional brightline rules and less like a flexible strategy or dynamic guideline that would serve to actually yield or bring about the highest effective happiness obtainable. Especially when considering that the majority of all marriages these days end up in divorce and even couples who do stay together often have outside affairs anyway, etc. Not to mention that whomever one ends up with in life is largely arbitrary in the first place (or at least the initial encounter etc)

Nothing in life is without inherent risk. And of course there are no guarantees of anything in life. Which is why I've always felt that marriage should always be first and foremost about love. But once that is established then any other additional rules or restrictions just seem to be redundant, superfluous and possibly stifling.

I've always thought that if I were to ever get married, for example, I would never ask of whomever is my future wife to never experience being with another man even if it was ever only just once in her married life. I think not only is it possible for love to transcend that, but that it might also be conceivably possible for something like that to actually renew if not even deepen my love for her. To not take anything or anyone for granted and to personally know firsthand her ability to enjoy passion and intimacy (even if, or perhaps especially with another man, etc) can exist beyond and outside of my own ability to give that to her, etc.... I've always believed that any woman like that who surrendered completely to her own deepest desires as so very sensual and alluring.

I often think about how best to balance the time value of money against the time value of life in order to obtain the highest effective emotional return on investment. Like you said, money is after all merely a tool. Think back to the stone ages, our caveman ancestors lived in a largely hunter and gatherer world in which the concept of accumulation of wealth simply did not exist. (not to mention language, math, and accountants and supervisor auditors!) They consumed what they found, when they had it, and that was it. It was only after agriculture was invented that humans could devote their time to other skilled and specialized pursuits, and when the concept of money and trade grew out of a need to account for the surplus. (hence why animals don't have a need for general ledgers! or accounting principles) If you hunted down an animal and made beef jerky out of him, and let's say you somehow stored it perfectly in a pristine time capsule, and then 30 years later dug up the beef jerky, would it have turned into a small mountain or molehill of beef jerky and afforded you a yummy stone age retirement? I think not. That only happens in the Bible, lol. Likewise, the whole concept of saving when young and allowing the power of exponential growth and compound interest to turn it into a small fortune half a lifetime later only works when all of society as a whole is growing. Essentially it is the voluntarily forgoing of spending current (today's) resources and capital and investing that into the future in the hopes of getting a larger piece of the global growth pie when all of society has expanded and grown that much larger! It is really just hedging on the expectation of future growth and riding that gravy train. Not a problem, if we were born in the 1950's and cashed out in the late 1999's when the going was good. But when from a macroeconomic standpoint there are no more growth to be had and when our entire planet is overpopulated and resource depletion is an impending danger to national and international security, I think it no longer makes sense to assume the status quo or business as usual.

The Feds have no intentions of raising interest rates and the government keeps printing money via quantitative easing to spend what it doesn't have at the expense of the tax payers and savers and investors and the holders of US government debt and US dollars. Essentially every time the government decides to print some more money (a largely digital

bookkeeping entry, as most money is bits on a server and not in paper form) your savings account gets diluted a little bit more. A secretive hidden taxation without representation is what it really is. The point is, there is no doubt that saving money is no longer the wisest individual strategy anymore.

But what to spend it on? Everything has a point of diminishing returns. Going from making \$40,000 USD a year to \$80,000 USD a year makes most people happier (subjectively) than a bump from \$80,000 USD to \$160,000 USD. (this is not even counting the higher tax margins!) Technology doesn't scale up either, spending \$1000 on a computer graphics card such as the Titan X does not yield a 200% improvement in gaming frame rates over something like a GTX 980 that costs only \$500. These graphics cards can be put in SLI mode (basically multiple cards can be combined and stacked to act as one single card) but having two cards does not yield twice the speed or graphical improvements, in point of fact, ironically, after the third card performance often decreases and there is a negative return on investment. Just like your favorite drink in the world is great but after the fourth cup you probably feel like you are starting to throw up.... A first class ticket on an airline is still going to take you just as long to get there as the guy who paid pennies on the dollar for the most crappiest seats on the airplane. Commercial aviation hasn't gotten any faster in terms of raw nominal speeds of civilian airliner aircraft since the late 1950's! For that matter Moore's law is dead and soon computers will stop getting any faster either! I could write a book on the limits of growth and marginal utility/diminishing returns but I think you get the idea.

Then there is the matter that time is not all the same. Your 20's to 40's will be the prime of your life, even if you could live from your 60's to your 80's those same 20 years won't be anything like before. That is something you can't buy back, with any amount of money.

108 Billion. That is the estimated total number of humans who have ever been born onto this earth.

So if soulmates exists, or if strictly speaking twinsouls exists, then the needle in a haystack is 1 out of 108 billion. Put another way, if you could meet and greet and get to know one person every single second and do it nonstop forever, it would take you about 3,500 years to get to say hi to everyone who has ever existed in all of human history up to this point. That is the most exhaustive search. Of course your soulmate could exist far far into the future, and might not have even been born yet. So 108 billion could turn out to be 108 trillion.

But of course, I don't think anyone is counting people who have lived and died decades, centuries or millennia before them as contenders for potential mates. Nor people who have yet to even exists, etc. Currently the human population on earth is around 7 billion. About half of which is the opposite gender. That should be the real effective 'list'.

But realistically we can prune and narrow it down even more. For example, as someone who is in her late 20's approaching her third decade on earth, you probably wouldn't take into consideration males who were significantly younger than you – i.e. someone who was younger than 18, nor anyone drastically older than you – like someone in his 80's.

Let's say you would consider all men between ages of 21 and 44 (that is to say, you would automatically reject anyone younger than 21 or older than 44) then that brings it down to about 32.3% of the entire male population within the United States. If we were to approximate that and extend it as a global figure, given that there are approximately 7250000000 humans alive right now, with about 101 males to 100 females globally (50.5% of all humans are male), we arrive at a much smaller number: 1,182,583,750.

Thus the pool of potential mates shrinks from 108 billion figure to slightly more than 1 billion, about a hundred fold reduction from the original numbers.

Unless you were actually and actively searching for people all over the world, I think you could even get away with just taking the US population as the pool, (321100000) which would bring it down from 1.2 billion to around 52,376,227 guys. About 52 million men.

To give you an idea, the population of all of New York City is around 8.5 million people (all genders and ages) while the population of the entire larger DFW metroplex is only about 7 million people at most. So if you take six or seven of the largest US cities combined together that would be about 50 million added up.

You probably wouldn't consider someone who was currently married. 90% of all US males in the age bracket of 20-24 years old have never married. That drops to 67% for the 25-29 age group. And 40% for 30-34 bracket. And so on and so forth.

Given our previously established pool of all US males between the ages of 21 to 44 years old being about 52 million people; the number of men who have never been married from this pool drops down to only about 26 million. So we get almost an exact reduction in half.

I know you said that you weren't looking for a husband to support you financially, but unless you would truly consider homeless men off the streets or those living under a bridge as possible 'soulmates', I think we can make some more pruning without "foolishly overlooking the right person", etc.

So of this 26 million subset of US males ages 21 to 44 who have never been married, if we were only to look at those making at least 40,000 USD a year (a conservative filter) or above, that means you are left with only 5.8 million guys from which to choose from.

To give you some reference, the entire Seattle metropolitan area has less than four million total population. Dallas Fort Worth has about 6.5 million people or so.

And since you consider yourself to be an attractive female, given that approximately 70% of all males in the US are medically obese, that 6.5 million drops to about only 1.95 million suitable guys.

Personality classifications are never perfect, but one has to start somewhere – albeit with very conservative prunes. Given that I believe you are an “INFP”, you could be potentially matched with the following other types : {infp;infj;intp;intj;enfp;enfj;entp;entj} and I do not believe you would mesh with any type outside of the above. That is about 46% of the population, and if we do a direct extrapolation (not accurate but close enough for our purposes) that would yield about 889,200 suitable (fitting all the aforementioned criteria) guys in the USA.

Of course this could be further narrowed down if you were to filter by race, height, and other criteria, but that rapidly encroaches on the possibility of ‘foolishly overlooking the right person’

Back to our original hypothetical, if you could somehow scan a person a second, it would only take you a mere 10.29 days to be able to know all 889,200 guys, rather than the impossible 3,500 years that we started out with. The needle in a haystack problem can now be brute forced with such a reduced pool space.

What strategies and tactics and creative ways have you used to try to find him?

Whenever I feel like I come really close to getting what I really want, I tend to back off. I kind of noticed that about me. Retroactively, when I go back and think about it and reflect upon the whole thing, it seems like this build up of tension that is suddenly released and I can go back to "just being [boring ordinary] me" again. I'm not sure if it even makes any sense or if you could ever relate to this perspective/notion. I'll try my best to describe it, it feels like a sort of sigh of relief, as in I'm finally able to breathe again and this huge burden had been lifted from my shoulders, and in that moment I instantly forget about what it was that caused me to 'want' so much in the first place and just get to go back to being the same old "me" mode that I've always known prior to getting so attached or attracted to whatever it was that I felt I really wanted. Like I'm on this metaphorical edge of sorts, and I'm about to discover or encounter or experience for the very first time the one thing or experience that I've hoped for, wished for, thought about and dreamed about my whole entire life and right on the edge and precipice something happens... instead of immediately following through and carrying it over the threshold I drop everything, back off and turn around... It is not that I don't want it anymore, it is just that I sense a sort of mental shift, a sort of snapping of the fingers kind of thing where I awaken from the trance that I had walked myself into and just return to doing the most mundane things in ordinary life that I had put aside for so long. I don't know why I behave this way so consistently and it doesn't even make any sense to me. It is almost like the very first instant that I realize I 'had it', it becomes a 'foregone conclusion' and I let myself go, become void of such wants, no longer in pursuit, and feel wash over me that 'inner bliss' that is so simple, requires nothing other than being in the moment, and that perhaps that is the true me.

Almost like only by getting what I want can I get past the current hurdle and then subsequently find that inner 'calm' again, that at the very end of this exhilarating chase/pursuit after I get what it was that I was going after .. then I regain the ability to return to the center and focus back towards myself again, in a sort of selfreflective inwardly mode of existence where I sustain my own happiness instead of having to look for it "out there".

I'm unsure if you have ever felt something like this before? It almost makes me feel that every relationship we have with others ultimately come back to being about a relationship we have with ourselves. In the end, perhaps only we (each of us ourselves) can only emotionally sustain ourselves and that other people and other relationships simply serve to help us "get there" to that place. In great relationships, both sides help each other arrive at a place within themselves that they couldn't have obtained by or on their own. I feel that couples need each other to help find *themselves*, ironically. Only when they have the stability of maintaining that "external" link can they stop frantically searching "outside" or elsewhere and can they then truly focus and concentrate their emotions, energy and resources towards building that innerworld and innerlife, towards deepening and developing oneself. Religiously, couples help one another come closer to God; nonreligiously, couples ideally help one another come closer to ironically each themselves!

To give you an concrete example, sometimes I would be obsessed about getting an email or hearing back from someone, but then the moment I get it, instead of reading it, I would go do something else completely. (I haven't figured out if it was because a) I temporarily lost interest in that moment 2) I wanted to save the best for last and savor it.) Like I was waiting just to wait, or chasing just to chase. I feel like a lot of times so much of that energy is spent trying to seek attention, approval, acceptance, from other things, events, people, etc "out there", and that so ironically the moment we finally get that, we revert back to living for our own selves again, back to looking and projecting and investing "inside" rather than "outwards".

It doesn't even have to be about a person, relationship, interpersonal interaction, or any other external experience, environmental circumstances or other events or outcomes. So in a way, even when it is nothing more but about a sort of epiphany or mental emotional discovery or sudden unexpected inner identification or lucidity that is completely independent of the outerworld, whenever I come close to getting to such moments of innerlight and discovery... and in fact I've repeatedly noticed that often the very first instant or initial moment that

I 'get' it or get into such a zone/mode/mood etc its like *poof* it all disappears and I'm suddenly perfectly content to be without it and to be back to where I was (emotively/ intellectually/ etc) prior to the 'chase' or the whole pursuit etc. Prior to knowing it, prior to chasing after it, prior to getting it, etc. That I'm instantly experientially and emotively transported and transformed BACK to the same old me the default me that I always was before being so enthralled by a girl, romantic love, an unique and distinctive perspective, belief, theory or view on life, or an external experience or event, etc... that I can finally just be "me" again. A "me" that doesn't have any attachments and that doesn't need anything or anyone else to be happy.

I'm physically pure but emotionally promiscuous. It is never on purpose and I never intend to hurt anyone. Like you, as a child I often found myself wanting to jump from perfectmoment to perfectmoment and slipping in and out of fantasies, etc. I guess that is something that has extended into my adult life and even as a grown up I tend to just want to experience things without having to attach labels to them and without having to offer statements or intentions of commitment, etc. I imagine in a way perhaps you would be able to relate. You have been involved with several men but maintained celibacy and never physically gave yourself to anyone, I think perhaps the male equivalent of that is a guy who has never really committed to anyone or even so much as really wanted a relationship with them. A sort of detached involvement, emotionally close but yet still on the sidelines.

Maybe I was afraid of delving too deeply, not (afraid) because I would be disappointed, but because I would have gotten exactly what I wanted and precisely what I asked for and I was apprehensive it simply would be too much. The feeling that I bitten off more than I could chew. As in what the heck did I really get myself into now? And how awkward and unpleasant backing out would be once it had already advanced to that stage.

But I would like to believe and I do believe that I also know the feeling of how it feels like to want to spend the rest of my life with someone, someone who is most special, precious, remarkable, and unforgettable. But more than that, to get to know that person so deeply, so ultimately. So completely. (it is NOT about perfection or being perfection) Where distance, time and even intentions become irrelevant and the only thing that stands out is how close two people were able to come, how deeply they formed their bonds, and intensely they developed those feelings and how strong such connections...

It is that pervasive feeling, something unshakeable, that perhaps only comes in dreams; something that transcends beyond logical rationalization, a sort of deepest feeling of liking or falling-in-like, etc. Where one would be willing to wait forever for something that lasts the rest of one's life, or an entire lifetime. Best friends forever but far deeper. Definitely an ethereal, effervescent feeling of pervasive kindness and love. It washes through and colors everything else in life. Something that, in your own words, feels like an "intensely personal pledge" and one that you were "willing to kneel down to and recognize as a center I was willing to allow pieces of my world to spin around"..

I believe you once asked me if I ever found anything that negated that dilemma?

I think it is funny the way human nature works. So I ask myself why exactly is it that I feel so bad about losing a writing partner such as yourself when prior to knowing you I was not really writing to anyone and hadn't done so in a while. Why, for example, when I've been single for a long time and didn't even care about that kind of stuff and wasn't making any effort to look for anyone that I would suddenly feel such disappointment when I realized that we were probably not right for each other in that way. Or why I had been so disappointed with AA for canceling my flight at the very last minute when I had gotten all but tired of traveling (business and pleasure) and just two weeks before that decided I didn't even want to go to Seattle anyway. And my making a fuss about it at the airport was most certainly not because I cared about getting the refund. So out of all of this, what exactly did I lose? It isn't like I ended up in worse off net position than before. Objectively do I know that. But why did I feel like I somehow lost a lot?

I mean from a psychological standpoint I think I know why it feels like this. Perhaps for the same reason when you realized that we had some incompatibilities in terms of outlooks and impasses in life and later had not written back to me with as much heart as before, and but yet you had nonetheless still felt surprised or offended when I confirmed that I had indeed canceled the trip. The mentioning that you were just about to write me back but wanted to get clarification or confirmation on whether or not I had truly decided to cancel basically confirms my speculation, especially when you sent the ecards back after finding out for sure. While this is true for both genders, in my opinion it affects women more than men. (and for the record I'm not misogynistic; I actually think females are the better gender, but I am glad I was born a male for no other reason than being the opposite gender allows me the chance to better enjoy femininity) Essentially I believe that women instinctively want options (yes even someone like you, but it isn't how it sounds) and to a large degree it is really the mere potential / possibility that you find compelling. For the same reason you made such a big deal out of me sending you a snail mail letter. I'm sure you knew it wasn't hard for someone like me to find anyone's address, but then again it was about you making the choice yourself whether or not to share that

with me. Likewise, you wanted to retain the ability to make the decision of whether or not you would agree to meet and if so to what extent or degree you would allow our interaction to develop based upon how comfortable or interested you felt and how much you wanted to share or how much to be vulnerable and to expose, and whether or not to trust and in what way, etc. I think my taking that choice or decision away from you when I wrote to cancel was what you were actually offended the most about, even though I'm not sure you cared that much about meeting anyway and seemed like you felt intimidated by it for some reason or another. I think you using my own words against me in reference to the "waste of time" was a bit nitpicking for a justification and you knew it.

In general, I think it is more painful to lose something than to never had had it in the first place. Humans are naturally risk and loss adverse. Simple thought experiment: if someone were to give you \$100 and then take it back, it would feel more awful than had you never gotten the free \$100 to begin with in the first place. Or replace that \$100 with anything else of value, for example like a thoughtful and sincere compliment. And likewise, my offering to come visit and then subsequently canceling probably on some level had a similar effect, regardless of whether or not you really even wanted to meet. By the same token, I believe this also answers my own question that I posed in the first paragraph.

But it is humbling to know just because I understand the way my mind works doesn't mean I am immune to any of it or exempt from the human condition. Part of me feels like what a pity that human nature is wired this way and plays these games with others and even with oneself!

What could truly be better or sweeter than a lifetime of love and happiness? Especially when paired with the right person by one's side? I would like to think that of all the missed opportunities in life that something like that would be the saddest and most tragic of them all. Conversely, being lucky and fortunate enough to have and to hold someone like that and to make such beautiful memories together and to share life's most treasured moments with them would really

be the best way to live and most special manner of being alive. I've always imagined, ever since I was a little kid, that if I ever found myself in a situation like that that I would know it and instantly come to recognize it and that I would never let something like that slip by nor allow any such missed opportunity happen to someone like me. I've always somehow known and felt that the absence of such a positivistic presence and all the associated ineffable experiences, joys and memories that could have been had would no doubt be the greatest singlemost source of immeasurable regret and piercing pain that anyone could ever have to endure or be subjected to in life.

But I love tragedies because I never stop believing that somehow everything can be solved. Whenever I read a tragic love story or watch one being portrayed on film I've always wondered why couldn't everyone just figure it all out. I've always wanted to get involved and tell them to wake up and snap out of it and that it wasn't too late to stop their foolishness or to salvage what was most precious and valuable to them in their life. Even at the worst of moments, I imagine the characters finally coming to their senses, imploring the author or the reader to save them from their own foolish thoughts and choices, and then I imagine a miracle occurring as if by the snapping of fingers ... and : Poof! All solved!

What is perhaps ultimately and supremely ironic, is that had you written back I would had gotten over all of this a long time ago. I am used to getting what I want and can usually get someone to write back to me using one tactic or another but you've been very different. Though I must admit, being in such a state has allowed me to be far more reflective and introspective than when I was in a stagnant state of "life as usual" or even if I was in the opposite state of being very happy and completely euphoric. I haven't been this forlorn, creative or insightful in a very long time. Maybe it is the theory of opponent process at work, though it doesn't feel very consoling.

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You once mentioned to me that you felt like life was a race against time, trying to fit everything you ever wanted to experience into an unreasonably short period like that of solving a puzzle. I find while I tend to live life like each day is my last, sometimes it is equally as important to ask myself how I would live if I could exist forever? If I could live forever I think I would actually welcome the puzzle. Let me explain.....

I noticed for example as a kid when I used to play a lot of games like SimCity or the Sims I would get so impatient and always got ahead of myself wondering how it would be like if I could be exceedingly rich (in the game) and all the big houses I could build and fancy things I would be able to furnish them with. So it went without saying that I would use "cheats" and find ways to modify the game so that I would essentially be God, with infinite health, infinite wealth and infinite time. And you know what happened? Inevitably every time I went down this path I would get instantly bored of the game and having it all, even in a game, never turned out to be what I had imagined it would be. It completely ruins the balance and dynamic. Imagine playing a first person shooter game in which you could never be hurt and you had infinite ammo? It is akin to reading an engrossing novel and then suddenly skipping ahead and jumping to the very end, it sort of ruins and spoils it. I realized that it was the structural challenge, the frictional struggle and the meandering puzzle that made the game interesting, and perhaps if all life is just a game, then maybe the same holds true for reality as well.

When I was younger, back in the Windows 98 days, my parents never gave me much allowance as a kid so I had to get by with playing a lot of free "demos" of PC games. (this was before the era of torrents, lol!) I still fondly recall some of my favorites being Microsoft Midtown Madness (the original), Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six (original), and Age of Empires II, and Star Trek Voyager : Elite Force (original), and DiD's F22 TAW (Total Air War). I noticed even back then the very curious phenomenon that I actually enjoyed the DEMO versions of the aforementioned PC games more so than once I got the full version! It was almost as if I was able to extract more fun and happiness out of the limited demo versions than compared to when I finally got my hands on the full complete games.

If you ever enjoyed watching a movie trailer more than the actual movie then you know how it feels! I think I know why. I think we as human beings value potential and progress more so than steadystate. We would probably be happier as a poor person moving upwards in life than a rich person staying static. It is perhaps the journey, the progression and the solving of the puzzle or the act and process of piecing together the puzzle that actually makes us the most happiest! It is important to live in the moment and to live with awareness, but sometimes I feel that life actually happens when we least realize it.

For example, in the movie "In Time" (not to be confused with "Somewhere In Time") after the male protagonist is gifted a hundred years of free "time" (if you watch the movie it will all make sense) he finally gets to escape the endless toiling and gets to enjoy life and live large for once in his life. It is the stark contrasting juxtaposition that makes it all the more intense, real, and alive. Someone who was born into such a luxurious existence would have been bored of it, but it was the upwards mobility that was actually the most intriguing for him. So in the scene you see him spend an exorbitant amount of money for a one night luxury suite and finally gets to sleep in and wake up the following day in absolute comfort. He then spends eight weeks of his previous pay level for breakfast and while eating he catches the attention of a well to do girl/woman who seems to have noticed that he ate too fast and stood out as being unique in many other ways. She was naturally and instinctively drawn to him and attracted to him because he seemed to have something that she didn't have, or rather ironically, he didn't have what she had always had.

I think in that scene the way she looks at him while he is eating and how he is (or becomes) instantly "special" in her eyes, how she is so fond of him, even during this very brief and limited encounter, during what would be by any other account still the budding 'scanning'/'probing' or 'discovery' phrase of an interaction that might lead to friendship or relationship, etc. was distinctively endearing in a way that puts traditional (common) love/matchmaking to shame. It is a way that (I imagine) all guys (or girls for that matter) would ideally wish to be loved

or admired. A sort of straight and narrow preselection or prequalification. Of being seen and wanted and pursued for exactly who you are. Instead of having bumped into each other on a dating site where everyone is dehumanized to a profile behind a keyboard or a social network site where it is still a numbers game or some cheesy blind arrangement set up by mutual friends or acquaintances of acquaintances etc, they 'met' (for lack of better word) completely incidentally, serendipitously and fortuitously. There was no comparing of metrics, no formula or equation, no analysis of personality types or fits of compatibility thresholds or anything of that sort. He was minding his own business, even completely oblivious of her, and wasn't hitting on her or introducing himself or trying to impress her or persuade her, etc. In fact no one was trying to meet anyone, it just so happened to play out that way.

It is these real life physical encounters that are so raw and compelling because it affords a deeper truth and knowing. I've always felt there was something very wrong about everyone signing up on an online website or using their smart phone app (Tinder, etc) or meeting through a meetup group or awkward crap like "it's just lunch (TM)" or things that seem so artificial, direct, forced, like putting yourself out there and up for sale like a cattle in a meat market; to me it just feels kinda wrong. (not in the moral sense, just intuitively wrong). BTW, believe me, I'm well aware of the benefits of leveraging the instantaneously, pervasive and ubiquitous nature of the information superhighway (aka Internet) to strategize the discovery of finding anything from jobs to love, etc I just don't think it is the best way.... Sure it is efficient, effective and it scales, but on an individual level it just does not at all feel magical this way. In essence, it can be so much better than that.

Real life chance encounters like that that builds mystique and piques interest are the most raw and alive; physical "presence" encounters triumphs all other forms of encounters but not for the common reasons that most people might think. It is random and spontaneous and it isn't planned and can't be predicted. It is the ability to transcend words, language, and analysis and even thought and even that of emotions themselves. It is something subliminal or subconsciousness or

perhaps even on a level or layer deeper and more subtle than that. (I don't think it is even about visceral physical attractiveness, or typical things like "tone" or "body language", etc at least not primarily and not for this sort of special connection) Something that simply cannot be encoded, translated or conveyed with words or encapsulated in the form of an online profile text description or that of a couple of flattering photos on a facebook account, etc. A connection like that puts all the other match making criteria like finding someone of a particular height, age, looks, status, etc to shame. Shame isn't the right word, it simply transcends all of it altogether. There is no "bottoms up" or "top down" way of finding something like that, no amount of filtering, classification or categorization will ever work. It is one of those you just know it when it happens kind of thing that makes one so giddy and ecstatic and in the alive mood of pinching oneself. A sort of awakening to the realization of what it is all about. The ultimate form of knowing and existing. A inextricable and ineffable direct connection and naked closeness.

Admittedly it is exceedingly rare, which is what makes it all the more special. It doesn't happen to everyone, but when and if it does happen it can't be mistaken. I think something like this is what everyone (at least me) secretly wishes for but that few ever actually find. One "best" thing to experience in life, indeed!

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P. S. Had we met in person, this (or something like it) above all else is what I would have wanted to share with you or have discussed or talked about. While I didn't even exactly know at the time what I wanted to converse with you; I've had enough time to figure out for certain that it would have been a message similar to this, one that touches upon such feelings/thoughts/topics. I don't think I'm more articulate in person vs on paper, so while it would have been neat to say hi to you in person, I'm still glad I finally was able to write to you the contents of which the message that I would likely not have been able to fully convey or deliver in real life back in April. This is what I meant by waste of time, sometimes meeting in person distracts and takes away from the ability to actually get the message across. It is a structural thing, I've had this happen to me and have gotten sidetracked and derailed too many times. (mostly at work, or discussions/debates with friends/family but same concept really) I felt compelled to share something like that with you because like you I've always also felt that when push comes to shove a perfect love of such sweetness and piercing intensity is and has always been the "one best thing" to experience in life, above all else and by a wide margin. Even if we never get what we want, at least people like us have figured it all out. For me it is enough. I hope you are happy and doing well.

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I hope you didn't take it the wrong way at all, about race I mean, it wasn't how I meant it. I think it transcends race completely. I guess what I really meant to say is that if anything, it seems to help make you very much more unique, etc. About living each day like one's last.. I know you said that you found the concept overwhelming, but I think it all depends on how you look at it. It is not possible of course to actually live each and every day like one's very last day, because it would be too exhausting and because the novelty (for lack of better word) would quickly wear off, and because in actuality everyone can really only have one "last" day. The gist of it is to make every day count. I think that is the intent anyway. In actuality most people never get to know their actual last day, but I would like to think that if I knew, I wouldn't do anything differently at all. This is something I really thought about and when younger I used to think I would want to go do all these things and just have one last "perfect" day filled with everything I ever wanted to do or to see from dawn to dust, etc. I'm not sure about that anymore, my perspective has changed on that somewhat. I mean really, hypothetically, if I really knew that then I don't think I would go out of my way to do anything different, instead I would not change a single thing. I would still wake up and go to work, still do the usual routine things. I would imagine that externally and objectively absolutely everything would be the same and yet internally and subjectively everything would be completely different. The difference would be that everything would be that much more pronounced, heightened, and I would be so much more alert, aware, everything done with a certain mindful intentionality even though the actual actions were not any different from any other day. It is to be alive, in the moment, present and mentally there. To savor every single moment, however mundane, all the subtle nuances that we usually overlook and to take it all in and to just bask in the wonderment. It doesn't matter who we are or where we have been or where we are headed, because in that moment it existed and it mattered. I think I would want to live every single day like that, for the rest of my life, and not just on my very last day.

After high school I didn't really know what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. Academics never really held my interest and to me it was always a "means to an end" anyway. So I was sort of the opposite from you in that regard. Even in my youth I always felt that if I could just figure it out first, you know, the big picture, and what I really wanted the most out of life then I could later on always then go back and take care of the things that I needed to take care of in order to do the things that I really wanted to do. Maybe I was naive, but I saw what happened to people who went the typical route and how miserable they seemed (including my own parents) and I knew that I wanted something different. I suppose in that regard I was a bit more fortunate in that growing up I was afforded that kind of economic stability and never really had to worry about that. And I knew if I really wanted to, I could always improve my intellect or build my career at a later stage in life. Yes, I also had an adversarial relationship with time, but it was somewhat different. I was afraid that if I set aside "me" for too long in pursuit of the things that always had to get done anyway that by the time I finally had that, that it would be too late for me to figure out what I did all of that for. Does that even make sense?

In April of 2004 I enlisted and was shipped to MCRD in San Diego for Marine boot camp training. I was either 19 or 20 at the time, and at that stage of my life I was still very much open minded and wanted to experiment around. There was just this overwhelming sense of numbness and lack of purpose or direction and I thought I wanted something different, anything. But I quickly changed my mind at boot camp and wanted out. I don't really know how to describe the experience, other than it felt like everyone was reduced to being just a number, it felt like we were turned into robotic slaves, and it just wasn't worth it, what they would have made me give. In fact the very first day I just knew it wasn't at all for me. Whatever it was that I couldn't figure out myself, I knew that joining the armed forces wasn't going to help one bit. So a month later I got out and took a long vacation to China to see my extended relatives.

I spent the rest of the year in China and came back in early 2005, and enrolled in some computer science courses at the local University (UTA). I find it a little bit funny that you joined PenPalWorld on Jan 1st 2015. It was almost exactly ten years earlier that I first joined PenPalWorld, in fact I signed up shortly after coming back to the states after the new year, on January 8th 2005.

A few days later in early January I received a reply to my penpal listing from a girl called Mary. (Mary Taddicken of Boise, Idaho) We were both actually on the other site Interpals as opposed to PenPalWorld, and this was before there was the ability to upload profile photos. (I had started penpaling on Interpals since the age of 12, ironically the site owner is also my age and that was when he first started the site! Remember this was during a time when the Internet was still like the wild west.) Back then penpal profiles looked more like newspaper classified and less like facebook copycats. I think I was just about to turn 20 at the time and she was either 18 or 19. She shared with me that she was also an INFP (personality type) and that she loved to read and write and would be very happy if I wrote to her. So of course I wanted to write to her, and I was actually very flattered to tell you the truth.

We wrote to each other every single day but had an argument of some sort after the first week (I don't even remember what it was about; and this was before I got into the habit of archiving all messages). And she basically disappeared from the site and also stopped answering her emails. For three weeks I wrote to her and never heard from her again. I was completely devastated and didn't know what to do. There was just an overwhelming sense of loss and I never thought I could feel that way for someone I had never even met.

About a month later she finally wrote me back, and very warily accepted my apology and agreed to write with me again. I later learned that she felt hurt and had to take a break and that that was the reason she stopped going online for three weeks. I still recall being so relied and elated. We resumed and continued writing to each other, and later on talked on the phone (I spent a lot on long distance phone bills, this was before Skype, etc) and started snail mailing one another and even planned a visit that Spring during Spring break.

She shared with me that she grew up a bit sheltered. She was of mixed race, her father was Mexican and her mother was White. She lived with her uncle because her mother had passed away from a heart attack and her father had left them both long ago before that. Her passion was in the arts and she was also a bit of an emo nerd, she told me that she either wanted to become a graphics animator or go into genetic research of some sort.

She was supposed to come down to visit me in March but my parents were very against it (I'm not sure why; they probably felt I was too involved and that it wasn't good for me this was when my parents still had an influence over me) and so that along with some other reasons it never happened and although she was saddened and disappointed she was still very eager to continue writing and chatting with me and that is exactly what we did for the next few months.

She gave me exactly what I wanted, which was to be sated. I didn't fully appreciate what she meant at the time, but she cryptically mentioned how she predicted that my 'fading pity' would slowly be replaced with indifference and that she felt she made the wrong choice or decision by "giving in" and losing her 'power' (maybe that wasn't the exact word she used but close enough). I knew she had issues with bonding, attachment, etc and I felt she was exaggerating and I didn't believe her and thought I would never lose interest in her.

We wrote until August, and during Summer break I had essentially stopped writing back to her. About three weeks after her last message (to which I didn't respond) she wrote me back one last time, admitting to me how lonely it felt and that she just wanted to hear from me again. She never begged me to write her back but she did say how she was never going to find another connection like that again (I felt at the time she was exaggerating and would eventually get over it), and although I felt like crap, I obviously didn't feel bad enough to have written her back, even if it was to give her proper closure. I knew she had my physical address (we did snail mail and traded gifts and packages back and forth) and I felt that if it really bothered her that much she would send me a physical letter, but she never did.

That was ten years ago, and many times throughout the years I've often thought to look her up and to apologize properly and just to see how she was doing. I never found a single trace of her on the Internet nor on social networks or even so much as a physical address. She seems to have fallen off the face of the earth. I wish we could have meet. Even though I don't think it would have changed anything in terms of any sort of romantic relationship, I wish we could have stayed in touch and somehow remained friends. If I could send her a message today I would just want to say I'm sorry.

This was probably the single most hurtful thing I've ever done to anyone in my life and I never expect to be forgiven for it.

9/14/2015

Nikita,

I apologize if I insulted you for offering to pay you for your time in writing back to me. I knew it wouldn't be fair if you didn't get something of equal or greater value in exchange but I couldn't think of what else I could possibly have to offer you. I'm also aware since I started this whole thing with a bunch of hypothetical questions you have really no reason to trust me, but if there was any way I could somehow prove to you I was being completely serious I would be more than happy to do so. I never lied to you, the hypotheticals were just that, but everything else was true and real.

Beyond mere writing I think it was that sort of permanence in connection that I craved. The writing itself was just a method of expression, a means to an end, and a tool. Given that you told me you lived most of your life being relatively commitment adverse I thought that you might understand and relate to that in your own way. What I really lack is some meaningful counterbalance to a life that has up to that point consisted entirely of a series of fleeting impermanence. For once I wanted to finally commit to something or someone, however small but meaningful, and in whatever way that I could manage to do so.

Based on our correspondence I'd like to believe that I kind of understood what you really wanted in life. And romantic love was just a tiny speck in the vast ocean of experiences that you desired. Sure, when push comes to shove you'd grab hold of it if it was the only thing you could have, but I felt that once you found that sort of love it wouldn't be completely enough to sustain you, certainly not indefinitely. You'd wish to travel the world, to explore new things and to do all of that and more with him by your side. Perhaps I am naïve and hopelessly romantic and foolishly idealistic, but I've always wanted that sort of love to be the one and only thing in my life, to the point where I would happily forsake all else – and by that I do mean everything else. I knew that sort of narrowness would make someone like you feel stifled, even suffocated

and that intensity would merely serve to intimidate you and scare you away. Part of me also felt that given what you described with regards to encounters with other men that lacked 'control' that I wouldn't be patient enough for someone like yourself. I think part of that is because growing up I always wanted to frontload everything in life, fearful that if I didn't do it now I would lose it forever and never get the chance again. So by midage (30) nothing much in life really excites me anymore. There is nothing new under the sun. Not to sound conceited but from a bigger picture perspective I already know all there is to know. Figuring it all out is what I've been doing my entire life and I've gotten quite good at it. In essence all the low hanging fruit is gone. The only thing that I have yet to experience is falling in love and really connecting with someone in that special way. But I think part of it was because I rushed through all of the rest of it and never really took the time required to truly appreciate any of it. And whether intentional or otherwise, I saved romantic love for the very last. It is the only thing that is still new for me, the only thing that I have yet to experience, know, or touch. Part of me is afraid that perhaps I hyped it up in my mind to such epic proportions that there is simply no way I would not feel let down, regardless of how perfect it otherwise actually was. The sort of imbalance and asymmetries that I think I want might not even be sustainable, especially long term.

You are one of the most unique individuals that I have ever written with and I felt that since we both enjoyed reading and writing we could share a sort of connection that had some permanence to it. Even though I stated numerous times that I thought that eventually we'd get bored of each other, I was actually hoping that it would never transpire. But I also felt from experience that the only way something like that would last 'forever' and that no one would ever get let down was to keep it relatively abstract, vague, and hypothetical and not to attach any other conditions or contingencies to it. So I was really saddened when I felt that your continued writing to me was contingent on whether or not I made the trip to Seattle. The reason I initially wrote to you to cancel was because I felt that you had stopped writing back to me as fervently as you had before, maybe because you wanted to see if I matched or measured up in person to perhaps what you had expected

in your mind. Essentially I felt you didn't want to waste any more time writing to me if you didn't feel I was who you expected in person or if the potential for something like a real relationship simply wasn't there. (probably because – and this is just my speculation – you were afraid if you gotten too involved or invested and I turned out to be not who you expected that you would be too hurt, etc) The fact that you completely stopped writing to me immediately after I confirmed that I canceled the Seattle trip just further solidified my speculations. I'm certainly to blame because in my very first message to you I implied that I wanted a romantic relationship with you, and I'm sorry that I lead you on with hypotheticals. Also, when you finally wrote me back on April 27th agreeing to continue writing with me, you stated that you really didn't like hypotheticals anymore and implied that writing abstractly didn't interest you anymore. You didn't reply back to me for more than a whole week after I wrote back to you, when compared to previously when you made the effort to take time out of your day to write me a long letter every single day (yes I know that was not sustainable under any circumstance, but I was still hoping it wouldn't be so abrupt) I felt that in retrospect the only reason you wrote to me so prolifically to begin with was because you might have felt that whatever it was that you thought we shared had the potential to develop into something akin to a relationship and that was the true reason why you wrote to me so engrossingly in the beginning. And so when you assessed (obviously since I canceled the trip on you) that I wasn't who you hoped I was, you had no further interest or motivation to continue writing with me and certainty not in that way.

Being a Chinese person (based on ethnicity) living in America, I certainly have no grounds or standing, and I'm not racists nor am I trying to be politically incorrect, but when you told me your name was Nikita I had initially assumed you were Russian. (remember I asked you if you were a spy?) It was only later on after I checked you out that I figured you were partially African American. I just never felt anything for black girls and I'm really sorry that I let my blanket preferences get in the way of truly getting to know you as a unique and special individual. When I checked out your facebook profile and saw that you listened to

Mystic Arrows (some Reggie genre) I felt we didn't even share same taste in music. I guess I'm just the type of person that jumps ahead of himself to his own detriment. I think if I didn't check you out online I definitely would have meet you in person and developed a different opinion. The irony is that knowing everything isn't what it is hyped up to be.

I've thought about all of this a lot the past few months, just trying to picture mentally how the outcome ended up the way it did when all I ever really wanted was a sort of connection that I thought you'd be happy to oblige. It is not so much that I couldn't take "no" for an answer, is it just that given the way that you initially wrote to me and what I thought we shared, I found it almost incomprehensible (not as in I was offended, but as in I was genuinely puzzled/confused) that you would stop writing to me so abruptly without even giving me a real explanation as to why or any form of closure. If it was anything or anyone else I probably could have cared less and wouldn't have given it a second thought, but I had really enjoyed writing with you and felt that no matter what I always wanted to maintain that connection in whatever way possible. Even though we aren't each other's soulmates I still really liked you as a person. It wasn't pity, it was empathy but it was also more than just that. And I think if we lived in a world where people could only ever interact with each other through writing (no pictures, no physical encounters, etc) that I'd be in love with you. I've always felt that you used my words against me ("waste of time") as more or less an excuse. An excuse for what I still don't know. I'm sorry if I hurt you, if it is any consolation at all, I'm pretty sure I'm the one who ultimately ended up being much more hurt, but just in a different way. The ultimately irony was that something that started out as a joke and a hypothetical ended up being very real, for me. I guess the joke is on me.

PGP Public keyservers:

pgp.mit.edu

keys.gnupg.net

sks-keyservers.net

Edward Snowden's "PGP" Tutorial

*"GPG for Journalists - Windows edition /
Encryption for Journalists"*

<https://vimeo.com/56881481>

darkbit@startmail.com

PGP Key ID:

66559D3B / 0xD80BA46D66559D3B

PGP Fingerprint:

8DA3 9238 EA06 099B CAFF A1DC D80B A46D 6655 9D3B

Associated BitMessage address:

BM-NB3Sif9VrpojxvQw5rZ7j6t5Ucb2Etjq

BM-NB3Sif9VrpojxvQw5rZ7j6t5Ucb2Etjq

BM-NB3Sif9VrpojxvQw5rZ7j6t5Ucb2Etjq

darkbit@protonmail.ch

PGP Key ID:

3349A6C2 / 0x832323C83349A6C2

PGP Fingerprint:

34CB F37C 4860 81FB 7F23 705A 8323 23C8 3349 A6C2

Associated BitMessage address:

BM-2cVfvKhMipwijwQ9udPP2FBqxqjPLdwdx5

BM-2cVfvKhMipwijwQ9udPP2FBqxqjPLdwdx5

BM-2cVfvKhMipwijwQ9udPP2FBqxqjPLdwdx5

bochen@tutanota.com

PGP Key ID:

B46243C3 / 0x3AAD45C7B46243C3

PGP Fingerprint:

28E0 8DC2 D6FA 61C8 B8FF 468C 3AAD 45C7 B462 43C3

Associated BitMessage address:

BM-NB1EMMkdzBL4CVzZ142gR3YipQ7Cohve

BM-NB1EMMkdzBL4CVzZ142gR3YipQ7Cohve

BM-NB1EMMkdzBL4CVzZ142gR3YipQ7Cohve

hydrogen-pi@countermail.com

PGP Key ID:

C5FE2A43 / 0x3E58225AC5FE2A43

PGP Fingerprint:

AA04 3FF2 5499 1A56 1FDB 0062 3E58 225A C5FE 2A43

Associated BitMessage address:

BM-2cVb9LoxmLbAYJikPAT83iQEJFxECERST4

BM-2cVb9LoxmLbAYJikPAT83iQEJFxECERST4

BM-2cVb9LoxmLbAYJikPAT83iQEJFxECERST4

THE END

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